

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FINISHES AND INTERIORS SECTOR

JUNE 2017



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WELCOME

It is probably safe to say nobody saw the election coming, except perhaps Mr May. However predictable that result looked, we live in uncertain times, from Trump to Macron, Erdogan to Merkel. Who knows what we will face in a changing world, where old allegiances are breaking down and political landscapes changing. We are in for something different, good and bad.

In uncertain times, it is best to have a resilient business, one that can adapt to change. There are many issues you can't control – the impact of Brexit, for example. So we need to focus on what we can influence.

One of the great challenges facing our industry – and it was there before Brexit – is the lack of skills in our workforce and the need to adapt to new technology. We can see the problem coming. Mark Farmer, author of the *Modernise or Die* report on the future of construction, describes it as a "skills timebomb".

The only question is: do we wait for the bomb to detonate or do we try to diffuse it? FIS has decided to do something about it and has invested in a new Skills Delivery Team, led by Helen Yeulet. Our ambition is simple but far from easy:

- **New blood** – 1,500 new entrants a year
- **A fully qualified workforce** – everyone at least to NVQ2 by 2020
- **Longer working life through career development**

We aim to do this by joining the dots and making it easier for employers to find and recruit new talent, freeing the process of training from friction and removing administration costs where possible. The plethora of schemes and initiatives will be aligned so that employers can get help and funding easily, from one source.

For developers and local government, this means they will be able to see the true social value of their Section 106 planning requirements for apprentices.

I started my career in submarines and learned that you can either drift where the tide takes you or steer towards your destination. At FIS, and in the fit-out sector, we know where we want to be. And we are steering a steady course to achieve that.

David Frise, FIS chief executive

Front cover: Claremont Group Interiors' Gold award-winning project (page 24)

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Printer: Pureprint Editorial production: Wheal Associates Ltd

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FIS given green light to survey members about CITB

FIS has been recognised by CITB as a 'prescribed organisation' in time for this year's consensus process to gauge industry support for the training body.

The association's chief executive, David Frise, welcomed the development as a chance to give members more say in the CITB's role. "We have been deemed a representative body of sufficient size to contribute to the consensus," he said. "The decision reflects the increased status of FIS post the merger of AIS and FPDC. It shows our voice is being listened to and heard."

CITB is required by the government to demonstrate every three years that it has the support of the construction industry. The upcoming consensus process runs



David Frise:
"We'll be focusing on getting better value out of CITB"

from 3 July to 29 September this year. It will give employers across the industry a chance to say whether the levy system should continue.

With its new status, FIS joins 13 other consensus federations, including Build UK – through which FIS members have until now been represented.

FIS can now survey its own members on their views. The association will be holding events over the summer to gauge opinion, including members meetings and webinars.

"We will be focused on getting better value out of CITB on behalf of members," said Frise. "We'll be asking all our members: 'What do you think?' and representing those views."

New group set up to give a voice to women in fit-out

FIS has set up a Women in Fit-Out special interest forum to help bring greater recognition to a crucial part of the construction team.

Helen Tapper, finance director of Tapper Interiors and one of the founders of the group, believes it's been a long time coming.

"Women in fit-out haven't got a voice," she says. "Many of them work alone in a business's office – dealing with everything from CIS and HMRC issues, to procurement and logistics problems, to PA duties. It can be a very lonely place. And some of these are £2m turnover businesses, so there's a lot of pressure."



Chaired by Deborah Gore, FIS board member and HR director of Encon Group (pictured), the new group is planning to run a WIFO conference next year.

In the meantime, it will gather the names of women working in the sector and hold focus groups to bring women together and raise awareness.

A central focus of the group's efforts will be on setting up a new Pitman qualification – a level 3 in small business

management, which the group believes will better represent the needs of women working in the sector.

As Deborah Gore says: "Only 11% of the construction workforce is female and less than 1% are working on building sites – that has to be one of the worst records of any industry. So we have a lot to do."

• Women In Fit-Out is keen to identify women in the industry – please contact womeninfitout@thefis.org

ECIC: one in four contractors risks falling foul of HSE

A specialist insurer for the contracting sector is urging contractors to scrutinise their health and safety procedures to ensure they have documented evidence of health and safety assessments for every worker employed on site – whether directly or indirectly via labour-only or bona fide subcontractors.

In a survey of 350 contractors, undertaken with *Construction Enquirer* in March, ECIC found that while the majority (75%) ensure their workers sign site-specific health and safety assessments at the start of each job, 13% say they do not and 12% are unsure.

The survey also found that nearly a third of contractors think Brexit will have an impact on health and safety legislation.

In 2014/15 there were 258 prosecutions in the construction sector by the Health and Safety Executive, 243 (94%) of which resulted in a guilty verdict for at

least one offence. Aside from the serious impact this has on workers suffering work-related ill health or injury, changes to the sentencing guidelines last year have seen fines for breaches in health and safety rules rise significantly.

Ian Hollingworth, head of claims for ECIC, said: "Although we face uncertainties as a result of Brexit, and skills shortages are creating more demand for subcontractors, now is not the time to lose focus on health and safety."

"Last year's changes to the sentencing guidelines mean firms face much heavier fines for health and safety offences. In the year since the guidelines were introduced, there have been 19 fines of over £1m compared with three in 2015 and none in 2014."

"We urge the firms failing to comply to provide all workers with, relevant risk assessments and method statements without delay," www.ecic.co.uk

Cundall scores WELL with new London office

The London headquarters

of engineering firm Cundall, One Carter Lane (pictured), is one of the first buildings in Europe to achieve certification through the WELL Building Standard.

WELL is a performance-based certification system that marries best practice in design and construction with evidence-based medical and scientific research in seven categories of building performance – air, water, light, nourishment, fitness, comfort and mind.

Cundall's focus in the 15,400ft² Cat A office has been on employee wellbeing. This includes biophilic and acoustic features such as an active green wall, a planted trellis divider and acoustic baffles integrated with tall shelving units.

According to Cundall sustainability partner Alan Fogarty: "Many businesses are seeing WELL as a means of demonstrating the quality of office space to attract and retain staff. We've created a working example of how the WELL Building Standard can be applied



without breaking the bank."

The firm has applied WELL criteria such as testing and monitoring air and water quality. The lighting design maximises the use of natural daylight, with light level sensors that reduce or increase levels when appropriate.

Required preconditions or recommendations of WELL were incorporated into the planning of the building in use – it offers changing facilities, showers and cycle racks, as well as weekly yoga classes and fresh fruit in the café, for example.

www.cundall.com

Instarmac gains ISO accreditation

Following recent changes to the 9001 and 14001 accreditations, cement and bitumen specialist Instarmac Group has been granted continued registration of OHSAS 18001 and transition to ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001:2015.

The ISO 9001:2008 and 14001:2004 standards become obsolete in September 2018. ISO has rewritten the

9001 and 14001 standard to create one framework.

The framework focuses on 10 aspects, including context of the organisation, leadership, planning, support, operation, performance evaluation and improvement, which will be applied to all standards to create a uniform framework for all new ISO certificates.

Darren Gough, quality and operations manager at Instarmac, said: "The transition to the new 2015 versions encouraged us to focus more on risk analysis and any challenges we foresee in the management of business processes. Using tools such as FMEA [failure modes and effects analysis], we were able to determine risks and actions required."

www.instarmac.co.uk



Standards bearers: (l-r) Instarmac quality, health and safety team Ryan Boon, Martin Elks and Darren Gough

NEWS IN BRIEF



SARACEN TAKES OFFICE IN MEDIA CITY

Workplace consultant Saracen Interiors has opened a new office in Manchester's Media City. The London-based business has in recent years focused increasingly on the North – recent contract wins have included the Scarborough Building Society building in Scarborough.

www.saraceninteriors.com



ALLGOOD APPOINTS EXPORT DIRECTOR

Neil Holmes has returned to door supplier Allgood as its export sales director, having served as the company's southern region sales director seven years ago. He brings international experience to the role, from

work with Hafele Australia and Lorient – for whom he helped establish acoustic, smoke and fire seal systems in Singapore and Southeast Asia.

www.allgood.co.uk

QIC EXTENDS PAINT LINE

QIC Trims, in association with Swiss powder coating specialist Gema, has installed a semi-automated paint line at its Gawcott, Buckinghamshire, manufacturing facility – home to the firm's



head office. The company manufactures aluminium trims, specialising in suspended ceilings, drylining and glass partitions. The new line allows QIC to reclaim and recycle 100% of its Ral 9010 powder.

www.qic-trims.com

BW APPOINTED TO UNIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

London fit-out firm BW has secured its first project on the City University Framework to upgrade the university's buildings and improve the student environment. The project involves the strip-out and rebuild of the 1,115m² ground floor of the Drysdale building, London, over a 20-week period.

www.wearebw.com

CONTRACTS

Armstrong adds to Welsh school

A mix of metal and mineral fibre systems from Armstrong Ceiling Solutions has been used in a new Welsh school building.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council specified 2,000m² of canopies and tiles for the new 6,500m² teaching block at Ystalyfera medium comprehensive school in South Wales.

Over a 19-month build on a tight site, D-H 700 microperforated metal Hook-On canopies were installed in

classrooms, with Axiom Knife Edge canopies and Vector tiles used elsewhere. Perla 600mm x 600mm mineral fibre tiles were also fitted in classrooms and toilet areas. In addition, MicroLook 8 Lay-In tiles finished in an oak wood effect and featuring a 100mm Axiom Classic profile were used in circulation and break-out areas and a three-storey atrium.

www.armstrongceilings.co.uk



Jennor ups its game at Liverpool Museum

Jennor (UK) completed a large ceiling and lighting project at the Museum of Liverpool earlier this year. Almost all the ceilings to the main display areas had to be replaced, which first meant removing most of the exhibits, erecting guards around glass cabinets, protecting floors and removing all lighting, grilles, cameras and hanging exhibits.

Jennor fitted mostly Armstrong Ultima Plus ceilings in 15mm Prelude grids, with some MF ceilings to lobbies and perimeters, and new lighting in several areas. The job included negotiating a three-storey central staircase (pictured) using a cherry-picker and working around existing maintenance contractors.

www.jennor.co.uk

Style adds space flexibility to two London offices

Style has helped transform the London offices of financial derivatives trading company IG Group (pictured).

Approached by architect ID:SR Sheppard Robson, Style designed and installed wall panels that slide and spin across an open space to create meeting spaces for groups of two to 20 people.

Both sides of the panels act as magnetic writeable white-boards that can be swivelled round, creating an adaptable workspace where

employees can discuss ideas or screen themselves off.

Moveable wall systems have also been installed in the new London offices of law firm Goodwin. Working with WATG architects and

contractor Overbury at 100 Cheapside, Style created meeting spaces in the reception and conference room, which can be divided into three meeting rooms or a large and a smaller room.

In the reception, a glazed DORMA Varitrans partitioning wall creates a seating area separated by a corridor, while in the conference suite two DORMA Moveo walls combine to divide the space into different sized rooms.

www.style-partitions.co.uk



Planned Office revamp in Welshpool

Planned Office Interiors has carried out the complete refurbishment of NFU Mutual's flagship agency in the centre of Welshpool.

The 12-week project, which completed in April, transformed a 290m² ground-floor space

from bare brick to a conference room, three private offices and a large kitchen area with storage space. The open-plan reception and office area features a bespoke wall, following a photography competition run by NFU Mutual.

The Planned Office Interiors team took the project from design through to installation, including structural work, carpeting, heating, air conditioning, plumbing, rewiring, decoration and sourcing of bespoke office furniture.

Special features included installing a wifi lighting system and an LED strip system to illuminate the 10m wide photographic wall.

www.plannedofficeinteriors.co.uk



ROCKFON GETS TO GRIPS WITH TOOLS AND BOOKS

Power tool manufacturer Festool has chosen Rockfon Tropic ceiling tiles to replace dated wet felted tiles as part of its UK head office refurbishment. The ceilings were installed using Chicago Metallic T24 Click 2890 grids, onto which the tiles were clicked into position.

Rockfon tiles also appear at The Word, a creative hub in South Shields whose circular façade resembles the pages of a book. Mono Acoustic ceilings were installed throughout to tackle reverberation issues resulting from the open-plan design and triple-height atrium.

www.rockfon.co.uk

SCOTWOOD COMPLETES REASSURING JOB

Scotwood Interiors, has completed the fit-out of a suite of meeting rooms for long-standing client Royal London Group, at the mutual life and pensions company's offices in Queen Street, Edinburgh.

The 14-week project involved stripping out air conditioning, partitions and flooring and creating 10 meeting spaces of varying sizes, including folding screens for added flexibility. Walnut panels, timber veneered ceilings and glass walls were used, along with designer curtains and wallpaper, digital prints and soft furnishings.

www.scotwood.com

PRODUCTS

FIRE SCREEN DOORS

Planet's latest **FireTec** doorsets and partitioning screens offer 60 minutes' fire protection without a chunky framework. With the side screens featuring a butt-jointed glaze, the slim framework can be finished in stainless steel or polyester powder coating. Pull handles can be bolted through the glass on integrity-only doors or through the head and base rails on the integrity/insulation versions. www.planetpartitioning.co.uk

ACOUSTIC DROP SEAL

Lorient has added aluminium drop seals to its range of architectural seals. Face-fixed to the door leaf or mortised into the bottom, the **LAS8014si** is a heavy-duty seal with acoustic performance of 47dB. It features a wraparound outer gasket with an internal gasket, and a parallel drop action that gives close contact to the floor even on uneven surfaces. The seal meets the smoke

leakage performance requirements of BS 9999. www.lorientuk.com

VINYL TILE COLLECTION

Interface has introduced a luxury vinyl tile collection, **Level Set**, in a range of textures, colours and patterns. Available in 28 varieties of natural or textured woodgrain and stone, the tiles are 25cm x 1m skinny planks or 50cm x 50cm squares. Increased thickness offers good coverage of irregularities in the floor and Sound Choice backing meets acoustical sound requirements. www.interface.com

ACOUSTIC PANNELLING

Soundtect has developed a new ceiling panel as an alternative to baffles and rafts. The **Fins**, part of the Class range, are made from recycled polyester and are wall mounted to create floating ceilings that absorb sound. At 1,000mm wide, the Fins are installed via circular hooped bolts attached to



a suspended frame system or hooks on the ceiling. For wall applications, the panels have an internal system to create a floating finish. www.soundtect.com

BIM MODELS AND CPD

Selectaglaze has launched **BIM models** for secondary glazing. At www.nationalbimlibrary.com/ selectaglaze-ltd specifiers can find generic and proprietary BIM objects in Industry Foundation

Left: Interface's natural woodgrain vinyl flooring
Below: Soundtect's floating Fins



Class format and available for use in Revit, Bentley, ArchiCAD, Vectorworks and Teckla.

Selectaglaze's **Spotlight** blog (www.selectaglaze.co.uk/blogs) has also been approved by RIBA as CPD material. Specifiers can now gain points in The Built Environment; Treat of the Month; Secondary Glazing in Practice.

And for architects there are two CPDs on secondary glazing as well as a factory tour. www.selectaglaze.co.uk

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LEARNING TO BE SMART

Today's workers don't just need a desk and a chair, they want variety, flexibility and inspiration. **Dean Gurden** hears how designers and fit-out firms are responding to the challenge

How many of us can say we like where we work? We might enjoy our job, but all too often we're asked to do it in an environment seemingly designed to frustrate our best efforts to do it well. Thankfully, today's workspaces are changing and fit-out specialists have a crucial role to play in their transformation.

So what's been going wrong? According to Andrew Mawson, managing director and founder of workplace consultancy AWA, people are starting to realise that the bland, open-plan office spaces based on a hierarchical structure are inappropriate for today's ways of working.

"In the past, people designed offices without access to any data whatsoever," says Mawson. "In fact, in pretty much every project we've been brought into, the balance of meeting places has been wrong."

AWA's research shows that the average size of a meeting is 2.5 people, but most meeting



BSI refurbishment using PAS 3000

The BSI knew it had to walk the walk as well as talk the talk when it redeveloped its own offices in Chiswick, west London (pictured here and overleaf) at about the same time as launching its *Code of Practice for Smart Working* (PAS 3000).

"There wasn't much out there that joined together information on the concept of workplace, behavioural change and fit-out," says Sally Sellers, HR director for knowledge solutions at BSI, who was involved in delivering the refurbishment.

"The guidance is a toolkit that brings it all together. Loads of fit-out contractors are experts on furniture and fittings, but this guide deals with the behaviours you need to understand to get the benefit from all these products and solutions."

As a result, the BSI offices have been transformed. "People used to say the space felt very 1950s, very silo-ed. Everyone had their own large desk, there were no breakout spaces – it was

unsustainable," adds Sellers. "The new environment is vibrant, open and fresh, and encourages people to choose a workspace for what they're doing. This could be a sitting desk, a standing desk, an open conference room, a kitchen space or simply a collaborative table. And all these areas are fully technology-enabled."

Too often, Sellers believes, businesses buy in a whole stock of furniture without giving any thought to their staff work culture and behaviour, or how people are going to use it – it looks good but is ultimately a waste of money.

"As well as helping you think about the behavioural side of things, the PAS 3000 gets you to ask exactly what the business is trying to achieve," she says. "It takes you through, step by step, what you need to do to make this happen, including how you work with your senior leadership team, how you work with your employee base, what guides you need to write and what tools you need."



PHOTOS: LIBI PEDDER

spaces are designed for six to eight people. So staff find most of these rooms over-booked and under-populated. "Often only 50% of the space is being used in these badly designed offices. So it's all about getting the alignment tighter," says Mawson.

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology has had a big influence on office spaces and is continuing to influence their transformation.

Mark Catchlove, director, knowledge and insight, at furniture and office designer Herman Miller, says: "When designing offices and furniture in the past, you had to cope with big technologies, such as large computer screens, hard drives and printers – people were often incidental to what you had to get into the space. That's changed – technology now supports any way you want to work."

So technology has gone from being a driver

to a supporter and, in doing so, has added an important element to modern office space: choice. Companies are realising that their staff don't do the same thing every day.

As Joe Cilia, technical manager at FIS, explains, it's all about the three Cs. "We're either communicating or collaborating with people or concentrating on our own work," he says. "Office spaces are starting to reflect this behaviour, and the fact that people are no longer tied to their desks. Technology has allowed this to happen. Suddenly we've got communication going on across the silos."

Cilia believes the new generation of workers is much more demanding – they want to work flexibly, like they did at university. To attract and retain them, not only must companies provide an environment where employees can breathe fresh air and see outside (aspects addressed by environmental assessment methods such as the WELL Building Standard,

BREEAM and SKA), but they must also allow them to work smarter.

The British Standards Institution has recognised this and produced its specification PAS 3000:2015 Smart working.

Its author is Andy Lake, director of Flexibility, a website promoting smarter working (flexibility.co.uk). He explains that smart working has been around for some time, but the financial crisis accelerated its development, particularly in the public sector.

"Even before the Cabinet Office commissioned the guidance, the Government Property Unit had been pushing this agenda of efficiency and reform and trying to get the whole of the public sector, not just central government, modernising and working more effectively."

All age groups are having an impact, he says. "Working in a more virtual way is natural for the upcoming generation, but it's really been the



"We're often just coping with the office spaces we're given, not thriving in them"

older generation that's been driving the flexible work agenda, and the technology companies that have allowed it to happen," says Lake.

VARIETY OF SETTINGS

The PAS 3000 guidance recommends that companies offer a greater variety of settings in their offices. The old model of desks, formal meeting rooms and storage should be replaced with one that offers a variety of activity-based working areas.

There should be informal collaboration spaces, places to huddle, quiet spaces, project rooms, fewer but more flexible meeting rooms and less space given to unnecessary storage.

Those leading the charge are technology firms, according to Lake, closely followed by financial services organisations. And in the UK and the Netherlands, the government and public sector have been making great strides.

Fit-out firms and designers have a major part to play in pushing the smart working agenda, he says. "The main thing is to get the conversation with clients away from desks and desk ratios. Everybody wants to retain their territory, but by talking it through, you can get them to think differently," says Lake.

"There's a tendency at the implementation

stage to rely on current ways of working that just need to be tweaked a bit. But you have to think about what's coming down the line. If you're investing millions in new offices and technology, you want to be thinking seven to 10 years ahead. Are we going to get less mobile or more? Will it be completely paperless? What about voice and gesture-activated technologies and improvements in screen technology, such as intelligent partitions that have screens embedded in them?

"If you're already in the mode of thinking and working in a smarter way, adapting to and making the most of these innovations will be far easier."

It's true that, outside design and build contracts, architects and design firms call the shots. But Catchlove urges fit-out specialists to work with them. "A lot of designers produce a scheme, not because it looks hip and trendy, but because they've done a workplace strategic analysis," he says. "Fit-out people have been known to try and substitute products because they might get a better deal for themselves or the client"

Working together, however, designers and fit-out specialists can give businesses the office space they need to work smarter.

Sound check

Acoustics are often overlooked in an office design, says Paige Hodsman, concept developer – office environments for Saint-Gobain Ecophon.

"We rarely see good acoustic solutions. The problem is that when clients receive acoustic reports, they don't understand what they're looking at, so it's often value-engineered out, the office is built and then it's realised that there's a sound issue," she says. "By then, it's like putting a plaster on a gaping wound."

Acoustic issues must be tackled early in a project, says Hodsman. And that means clients and end users should be better educated on the subject. They need to be aware that if they get the specification wrong, it can have a detrimental effect on the business.

It's important to offer choice to end users, she adds. "Some might really like working in open-plan offices – they enjoy hearing other people talking and the general stimulation it brings – whereas for others it's really distracting," says Hodsman. "Yet people are often thrown into one-size-fits-all solutions and have to make do. That's it in a nutshell – we're often just coping with the office spaces we're given, not thriving in them."

- For more information, download Saint-Gobain Ecophon's guide, *Planning for Psychoacoustics: A Psychological Approach to Resolving Office Noise Distraction*, at bit.ly/2pPuuZO

Find out more

Here are a few places to learn about smarter working:

- Worktech Academy: www.worktechacademy.com
- Workplace Insight: workplaceinsight.net
- BSI's PAS 3000:2015 Smart working: shop.bsigroup.com
- FIS A Client's Guide: Office Fit-Out and Refurbishment (see p14)



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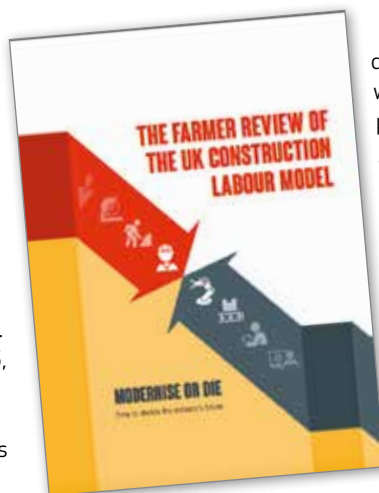
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'THERE'S NO EASY

We caught up with Mark Farmer, whose report on the construction sector's labour market has brought the skills crisis into sharp focus

Mark Farmer cites his father, a construction worker, as a major influence on his career choice. Farmer junior started out as a chartered quantity surveyor involved in a multitude of projects, from heavy civil engineering to retail and commercial work, before specialising in residential. Now the chief executive of Cast, the real estate and construction consultancy he founded last year, Farmer formerly worked for EC Harris (now Arcadis). On the back of a report he wrote for Arcadis in 2015, he started discussions with Brandon Lewis, then minister for housing, about the skills crisis and the effect it was having on the housebuilding industry. As a result, he was appointed to undertake a review for the government into the entire construction industry's labour model. *The Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model: Modernise or Die* was published in October 2016.



demand that construction be delivered in a different way, such as specifying higher minimum levels of pre-manufactured value. The second stakeholder is the government – as a client of the industry, but, possibly more important, as a policy setter to help the industry modernise. The third stakeholder is the industry itself. It needs to react to the challenges facing it and think about how it can change its processes before clients eventually start to ask for things differently.

What will happen if nothing is done to modernise the industry? Who is most at risk?

We'll see a gradual deterioration across the board with the symptoms we're seeing only getting worse. We'll hear about more and more projects beset by time, cost and quality problems due to declining workforce levels and a dilution of skills. Every single stakeholder is at risk: clients won't get the outcomes they're paying for; the government won't achieve economic growth as the construction industry won't be able to underpin its GDP or build critical infrastructure. The construction industry itself will also be at risk of going into terminal decline, amplified by increasing problems attracting new, young talent to the industry.

You identified specific time-bombs around skills. Why is it so important to address this problem?

Increasing skill levels and workforce productivity go directly to the heart of the industry's power to deliver. The ability to increase housing output and deliver critical national infrastructure is putting increased demands on the industry at a time when an ageing workforce and Brexit are likely to have a negative impact. A changing demographic is something insidious that we might not notice, but Brexit could create more of a structural shock – the skills time-bomb is very close to exploding in our face.

FIS has invested in a skills delivery team to help make the process of recruiting, training and upskilling staff as straightforward as possible. What are your thoughts on that?

Transforming and modernising our industry is not going to happen in an abstract environment. It needs individuals to take ownership of initiatives in their own spheres of influence. What FIS has done is a great example of this in action. It's seen the issues ahead and is taking a leading stance in addressing those issues, which will hopefully future-proof the role of the interiors and finishes sector.

How do we encourage companies that have no interest in training and stop them riding on the coat tails of companies that do invest in it?

Unfortunately it's a cultural behaviour that's quite widespread in the industry, and there's no easy fix for it. I don't think we'll ever get away

In *Modernise or Die*, you compare the construction industry to a sick patient in hospital suffering from a potentially terminal disease. What are the symptoms that so concern you?

The most important issue the industry is facing is the declining size of the workforce. My report highlights a fairly bleak picture of a skills crisis that will only get worse. This is driven by two factors that have not been major issues historically but are now becoming critical and unprecedented risks for the industry.

First is our ageing workforce. More people are retiring than entering the industry. Overlaid on this is the whole risk Brexit represents, and that we may not be able to rely on migrant workers in future. At the moment, we're beset with issues: poor quality in traditional construction techniques; build cost inflation and volatility, especially in London where the market's been very buoyant; and an overall lack of predictability in what we as an industry can deliver to our clients. These are all symptoms of the stresses and strains that are created by the skills crisis.

What can we do to reverse this decline?

There's no easy answer, but essentially we have to change the way we physically deliver construction. Ultimately, it's a matter of shifting from doing things in a traditional, labour-intensive way on construction sites to more of a hybrid approach that delivers more value offsite in a manufacturing environment. This is critical not only in addressing the labour and skills crisis, but also in making us more productive, and indeed, more attractive to new entrants. By moving more processes into a factory, it will also allow us to deliver at a level of quality and given price point much more consistently.

Who needs to be involved?

There are three key stakeholders. First, clients need to think differently about how they go about commissioning the construction industry. Many clients, particularly developers and housebuilders, don't demand enough of the industry. They're asking for the same old techniques and products, and then they moan about the result. They need to raise the bar and

ANSWER'



from the fact that some people don't think that it's their responsibility. What we really need to do is marginalise them and promote the 'calling out' of poor behaviour.

Do you think CITB will be reformed in the way that your report has recommended?

I really hope so. It needs reforming and requires a different, more strategic and enabling mandate. It needs to reorganise its grant funding model for skills and make sure training is aligned to what a modernised industry needs. It should also produce powerful outreach programmes to schools reflecting a modern, changing industry, not replaying what it necessarily looks like now.

Perhaps most important, CITB needs to have the support of the industry. To have that it will have to convince the industry it's going to be fit for purpose going forward, which is why some quick wins from an immediate reform programme are so important.

An often-heard excuse for not adopting building information modelling (BIM) is simply that clients aren't asking for it. Should contractors wait for clients to ask for innovation or should they constantly review what they offer?

I think it's a combination of both. As I've already said, clients have a major role to play in effecting change. The way they commission construction companies is massively influential in the supply chain and in making the industry more modern and progressive. BIM is just one example of how that might play out, but I do not believe it is the answer in isolation. I also think it's incumbent on the industry itself to grasp new modes of working – more pre-manufacturing, for instance, can then be combined with digital engineering techniques such as BIM to improve efficiencies right through, from design to manufacture and assembly and indeed operation.

Farmer recommendations in brief

1. Construction Leadership Council should oversee implementation of the Farmer recommendations.
2. CITB should be comprehensively reviewed and reformed.
3. Industry, clients and government should work to increase R&D and change commissioning from traditional to pre-manufactured approaches.
4. Industry, government and clients should deliver an innovation programme, define measures of progress and report regularly against these.
5. A reformed CITB should look to realign its grant funding model. Industry bodies/professional institutions should take a more active role in ensuring training produces appropriate talent.
6. A reformed CITB or stand-alone body should be empowered to deliver a more powerful image for the holistic 'built environment' process.
7. Government should recognise the value of the construction sector and be willing to intervene in education, planning and tax/employment policies.
8. Government should act to provide an 'initiation' stimulus to innovation in the housing sector by promoting use of pre-manufactured solutions.
9. Government, as part of its housing policy planning, should work with industry to establish a pipeline of new-build housing demand.
10. Government should consider introducing a charge (no more than 0.5% of construction value) on business clients to influence commissioning behaviour and supplement funding for skills and innovation.

OFFICE FIT-OUT: *all you need to know*

FIS's newly launched guide shines a light on the whats, wheres, whys and hows of creating an office that works for everyone. **Chris Wheal** explains what it offers

With no two office fit-outs ever the same, trying to write a comprehensive guide that would be useful to every client and contractor involved in the process was a tough challenge. But it was a challenge that FIS was prepared to accept.

Its new *Client Guide: Office Fit-Out and Refurbishment* is the result. And with it, FIS has shone a spotlight on the often unseen expertise involved in office fit-out.

The guide is a thoroughly researched document covering every aspect of an office fit-out, from early thoughts on whether or not to proceed, to post-occupancy analysis. And for the first time, contributors have helped compile a detailed, step-by-step process to help clients identify what should happen to make their fit-out work.

FIS hopes members, letting agents and others in the business will promote the guide to potential clients. Those office users will, in turn, better understand the complexity of what is involved, the value of expert advice and professional services, and the importance of contractors right down the supply chain.

There are sections on client decision-making and informing staff and customers. The guide introduces possible contracting routes, from using architects or designers and a quantity surveyor and main contractor, to opting for a design and build (D&B) one-stop-shop solution.

The guide details research into staff working practices that drive the design and offer opportunities to introduce improvements, creating workspaces that increase productivity as well as reduce absenteeism and staff turnover. It explains what good design can achieve and how that happens.

With such detailed input from FIS members,



the guide takes a magnifying glass to the nitty-gritty of the construction process. It discusses specification and tendering, contracts and fees and then provides clients with a thorough understanding of the construction process.

DOWN TO DETAIL

The detail includes the health and safety considerations of running a site, particularly an office fit-out in a building with other clients still working on alternative floors.

It explains the different sustainability standards and what they mean. Clients are advised to be clear about their aspirations as early as possible in the process, as a finalised design will allow more accurate pricing and make the fit-out affordable.

Just how much work, skill, thought and planning goes into the physical fit-out is given as much coverage as design and research. All

the different possible professionals who might become involved are listed alphabetically, from architect to workplace consultant.

All the specialist subcontractor skills of fit-out experts are also listed and the guide makes clear that their suggestions can pay dividends. The specification "needs to be flexible enough to allow expert subcontractors to suggest different ways of achieving the desired outcome and for the contractor to identify where different methods or timings can improve buildability", the guide says.

Moving staff out and in, arranging training in new equipment fitted, user manuals and other handover and occupancy issues are explained. And the concept of soft landings – where the contractor works with the client through the early period of occupancy to smooth out any issues that arise – is covered.

While the guide focuses on positives, it also warns clients against repeating the



- mistakes others have made. These include:
- Pointing to an office they like on TV or in a magazine and saying: "I want mine like that"
 - Plucking a budget figure out of thin air
 - Changing the design or specification at a late stage
 - Choosing the cheapest option without considering quality
 - Making unplanned and unannounced site visits that can halt construction and delay projects
 - Using 'snagging' to try to change the standards specified.

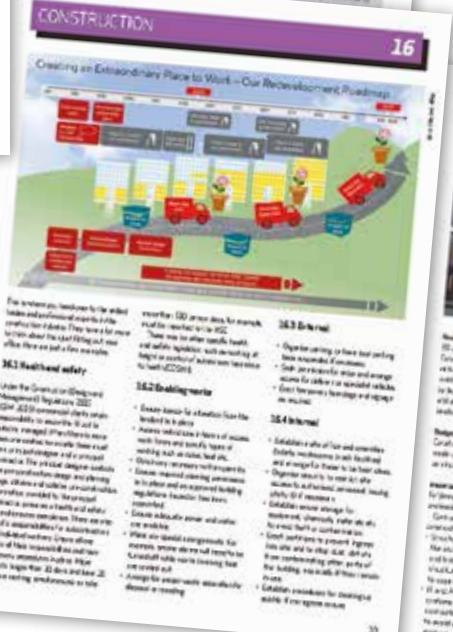
CASE STUDY

The guide includes a case study of a major fit-out carried out for the Institution of Structural Engineers.

All the key sources of information are included, such as reports from British Council for Offices (BCO), information on Building information Modelling (BIM) and details about the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. Numerous methodologies and standards are covered, including the Royal Institute of British Architects' Plan of Work and the British Standards Institution's Code of Practice on Smart Working.

The report simplifies the many competing demands of a project and sets out a straightforward and logical process map that hand-holds a client through the process.

FIS members can also use the guide to show clients that they are adhering to the highest professional standards. As the guide says at the outset: "Not everything in this guide will apply to every fit-out, but it should help you make your new office a great place to work, occupied on time, to specification and to a budget you can afford."



Perspectives from the experts

As part of a promotional video accompanying the launch of the guide, key figures from across the sector were asked what they saw as the most important aspect of an office fit-out.

• **Elina Grigoriou**, founder of Grigoriou Interiors, highlights the value of the design process. "It's like a tree: the taller and bigger the tree, the stronger it will be. It's the same with design: the longer the design process, the more rich it is, the better the outcome."

• **Martin Romaine**, sales director at Meronden, believes selecting the right contractor is key. "You need an efficient and intelligent contractor... small enough to care but big enough to cope."

• **Andrew Parkin**, acoustics partner at Cundall, highlights the crucial role of acoustics, particularly in open-plan offices. "The design has to work aesthetically, it has to work ergonomically... Integration between acoustics and the other factors are critical."

• **David Cant**, managing director of consultancy Veritas, focuses on health and safety. "Get that wrong and an accident could lead to an investigation, delays, prosecution, fines or even worse."

• **David Frise**, FIS chief executive, reminds readers: "The thing about doing a fit-out is: you don't always know what you don't know. If you use this fit-out guide, you'll cover all the bases."



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BUILD BACK TO THE FUTURE

FIS Skills has come up with a great way to match job seekers with construction firms desperate for skilled workers. **Victoria Madine** hears about the early successes of the new programme

At the start of 2017, job seeker Alex Baillie knew next to nothing about the interiors trade and had never heard of 'interior systems'. Fast-forward four months and Alex is working on site with Kenmor Ceilings & Partitions in his first steady job for several years – and training for an NVQ Level 2 in drylining (see box overleaf: All about Alex).

He has FIS Skills' new training initiative, BuildBack, to thank for his introduction to the finishes and fit-out sector and the opportunity to learn a new trade.

The idea behind BuildBack is simple – it bridges the gap between job seekers who are serious about developing a career in the finishes and interiors sector, and employers who need keen new workers more than ever.

In a survey of FIS members in March, 90% of trade company respondents said their business was being hindered by a lack of skilled trade

operatives, and almost half of companies faced increased labour demands (see box overleaf: Skills crisis in numbers).

FIS Skills estimates the sector needs to attract around 1,500 skilled new entrants every year by 2020 to keep pace with demand. BuildBack is part of its response to the growing skills crisis in the finishes and interiors sector.

As Paul Glover, project manager at FIS Skills explains, the crisis is the result of a combination of factors. "Our sector has an ageing workforce and a lack of new entrants," he says. "In part, this is due to a lack of general awareness about the opportunities in the trade, and reflects wider issues about people's sometimes negative perceptions about work in the construction sector."

He highlights the threats to the existing labour supply. "Brexit raises further question marks about the supply of labour. With well over half our members employing European

Open day with Mary Glindon MP (front centre) and partners involved in BuildBack



“By the time the person comes to site, they have a grasp of tools and materials and a CSCS card. Beats putting out a job ad and hoping for the best”

workers, any changes to the rules and regulations for immigrant labour could have a significant impact.”

Launched in February at Tyne Metropolitan College (TyneMet), BuildBack aims to demonstrate how the skills gap can be filled by tapping into the current pool of 1.56 million unemployed people available to work (ONS Labour Force Survey February 2017).

There have been numerous initiatives over the years to encourage job seekers to consider working in construction. But BuildBack has a screening process to find the people with a genuine interest in the sector, and promises to make participants site-ready more quickly.

BuildBack participants spend two weeks at college, completing a Specialist Upskilling Programme (SUP), followed by a two-week work placement on site with an employer.

All trainees are then offered at least one job interview and those who secure full-time employment with an employer are eligible to

have their fees paid for ongoing training to NVQ Level 2 in drylining. In addition, trainees receive free personal protective equipment (PPE) and a basic tool kit, and they are provided with a CSCS card. The idea is to minimise, as far as possible, any burden on the employer.

BUILDBACK IN DETAIL

So how does it all work on the ground? For the pilot BuildBack programme, FIS Skills worked in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus (through work coaches) to invite a group of unemployed individuals in the North East to an introduction to BuildBack at TyneMet.

During the day, attendees were introduced to the basics of drylining, with local employers on hand to talk about a career in the sector.

From this group, representatives from FIS Skills, along with tutors from TyneMet, invited 30 people (three cohorts of 10 individuals) to participate in BuildBack. The first cohort



has now completed the course and work experience, and four individuals have job offers as a direct result of the programme.

Alyn Carr, deputy head of construction at TyneMet, puts the success of BuildBack down to its focus. “There are a lot of courses

SKILLS CRISIS IN NUMBERS

Findings from FIS's survey of members and stakeholders in the first quarter of 2017

56%

of companies didn't claim training grants in 2016

48%

of companies face increased labour demands

54%

of companies didn't employ an apprentice in 2016

57.5%

of companies employ European labour

44%

of companies think taking on more contractual work will be hindered by a lack of skilled operatives

9%

of companies have a 90%-100% NVQ-qualified workforce

2%

of the workforce in employment are apprentices

90%

of trade companies say they are hindered by a lack of skilled operatives



FIS Skills delivery director Helen Yeulet with TyneMet's Dave Weatherburn (left) and Stevan Dawson

aimed at those seeking work, but most are very general and focused on employability. The appeal of BuildBack is that it's offering people the chance to develop a specific skill within a short period of time."

So is four weeks long enough to lay the foundations for a career in drylining? Paul Devlin, managing director at Kenmor Ceilings & Partitions – who recruited Alex Baillie through BuildBack – is in little doubt. The beauty of the scheme, he says, is its selective nature.

"You're meeting people who have made a positive decision to enter the trade," he says. "The college course means that by the time that person comes to your site, they have a basic grasp of which tools and materials do what, as well as a CSCS card. This beats putting out a job ad and hoping for the best."

The early success of BuildBack inspired FIS Skills to hold an open day at TyneMet in April to



Alex Baillie in a video promoting BuildBack

All about Alex

Each week day, Alex Baillie leaves his North Shields home at 5.30am sharp to take the Metro to Sunderland, where he works on site as a trainee dryliner with Kenmor Ceilings & Partitions.

Despite the early start, Alex says he "can't wait to get stuck into work, and never felt more positive about the future".

And Paul Devlin, director at Kenmor, says that Alex is everything he likes to see in a new recruit – "keen to learn, reliable, gets on with everyone".

Paul met Alex at FIS's introductory event in early 2017 at Tyne Metropolitan College to choose participants for the pilot phase of BuildBack. He says Alex's enthusiasm stood out immediately. Paul offered Alex a work experience place, and full-time employment soon followed. Alex is now working towards a Level 2 NVQ in drylining.

With a background in the military, Alex had limited experience of the construction industry, working with piling contractors, so his work coach at the local Jobcentre Plus suggested he take part in BuildBack.

Says Alex: "I could see this was a great opportunity to learn a trade – a way to earn a living. My travel to college and then to work experience was funded, and I was given the basic tools.

"I needed to show I was employable on site, so I focused on that. And it was proper work experience – I wasn't there to make the tea. I was proactive and made sure that all the lads knew I wanted to learn as much as possible."

showcase the scheme to employers and celebrate the collaborative efforts of its stakeholders – CITB, the Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus, FIS Skills and groups including the Dry Lining and Plastering Training Forum (DLPTF) and Wheels to Work.

Mary Glendon, MP for North Tyneside and shadow minister for environment, food and rural affairs, attended the day and was impressed by the initiative, attributing its success to working with the right partners and a firm foundation in work experience.

She says: "I believe this gives trainees more confidence and incentive to complete their training. This FIS Skills programme in North Tyneside has been so successful – I'd like to see FIS Skills expand it by setting up projects across the UK."

ROLLING IT OUT

The FIS Skills team are in the process of talking to colleges across the country about rolling out the BuildBack scheme. Glover is confident there are enough colleges with the right facilities to support a nationwide scheme.

But Helen Tapper, finance director at Oxford-based Tapper Interiors and an FIS Skills board member, believes employer buy-in will be crucial if the scheme is to flourish across

the country in the long term. "One of the biggest challenges we face is that self-employment in the sector is now the norm," she says. "Companies subcontract their labour and that leaves them with little incentive to offer training or career development support."

It will take a shift in the culture of the industry to address training shortfalls, Tapper adds, and schemes like BuildBack will have to raise awareness about the wider benefits of training.

"This is no quick fix to the skills crisis," she says. "FIS Skills needs to continue to be creative in how it reaches out to those who do still employ people directly."

FIS president Steve Coley agrees that the key to BuildBack's success will be networking with employers, securing financial support from CITB in the form of grants, and maintaining strong links with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus.

"BuildBack is a step in the right direction towards connecting people who are looking for work and employers who have jobs to fill," says Coley. "We know there are enough people out there with the potential to thrive in the finishes and interiors sector if they are given the chance to do so – and understand that these chances exist."



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CONTRACTORS AWARDS 2017

This year's FIS Awards Lunch, held on 6 June at The Dorchester Hotel, London, once again highlighted the skill and talent among finishes and fit-out teams. Comedian and TV radio producer John Lloyd presented the awards – the winners of the plastering categories had already received their awards at the FIS President's Lunch, held at the Plaisterer's Hall in February

THE JUDGES



This year's
judges
(clockwise
from top left):
Tony Pieri,
Clive Perry,
Barry Wilcox
and Robin
Wilcox

CATEGORY INFORMATION

The FIS Contractors Awards ceremony pays tribute to design and craftsmanship. The architect or interior designer of a Gold-winning project also receives an award. This year's awards comprised:

- Interior Fit Out (up to £1m and over £1m)
- Suspended Ceilings
- Partitioning
- Drywall Construction – Residential
- Drywall Construction – Commercial
- Steel Framed Systems
- Plastering – internal /external (Humber Salver and Crabb Trophy)
- Fibrous and GRG new build (Crabb Salver)
- Heritage plastering (Humber Salver)
- Specialist Joinery
- Operable Walls
- Project of the Year (selected by FIS judges from all category winners)

Certificates of excellence are also awarded for technical expertise and high standards of workmanship.

Awards | Project of the Year



SCS BUILDING SOLUTIONS **Project: Victoria Gate, Leeds** **Architect: ACME**

SCS's wide-ranging project formed part of the 42,000m² development of the Victoria Gate retail and leisure centre, featuring a John Lewis store and a two-street arcade with stores, restaurants, cafes and a casino. It involved the installation of internal steel framing systems, render, partitions, drylining, suspended ceilings GRG shields and fire stopping. "This project epitomises the true spirit of the FIS contractor membership," agreed the judges. "A passion to deliver a top-quality end-result against a myriad of testing challenges that required an enormous level of skill, ingenuity and vision. Many things conspired to frustrate the progress of this project, not least the ever-present time constraints and testing budget restrictions. Due to adverse site conditions, there was an enforced specification change that had to be cost-neutral even though the change attracted a much higher cost. Multiple components meant final assembly had to be meticulously measured and fabricated on site before final fixing. Despite these challenges, the project was punctuated by an unprecedented degree of collaboration between SCS, the main contractor and suppliers to ensure a stunning final result delivered on time and within budget."



**LOCKER & RILEY (FIBROUS PLASTERING)****Project: The Lanesborough Hotel, London****Architect: Reardon Smith Architects**

Locker & Riley undertook the spectacular plasterwork in the public areas of the iconic Lanesborough Hotel. Under the careful direction of Reardon Smith Architects, the grade II-listed hotel was completely renovated to honour the building's architectural heritage as a revered Regency landmark. Locker & Riley was engaged to provide technical design expertise to incorporate air-conditioning grilles and access panels into hand-sculpted fibrous plaster ceilings to create a seamless finish. "The quality of the decorative plasterwork was a feast to our eyes – we could feel the passion and dedication that had gone into it," enthused the judges. "To call it a refurbishment would be misleading; Locker & Riley was presented with large rooms that were no more than concrete boxes. A high degree of input was required before work could commence. Designs were supplied illustrating how the finished article should appear, but these had to be adapted to accommodate many services hidden behind the decorative plasterwork. And Locker & Riley designed, supplied and fitted all the steel-framed support work and grids needed. A major undertaking."

GOLD

CLAREMONT GROUP INTERIORS

Project: King, London

Gaming company King called on Claremont to create a creative and flexible environment for its 600 employees. The £4.6m interior design and fit-out had to reflect King's contemporary Soho location while also supporting the company's activity-based work culture.

The office comprises 14 pods with integrated audiovisual technology and write-on surfaces, while mobile sit-stand desks allow teams to reconfigure their space as needs change. The office includes an amphitheatre, art studio, music room, games area, nap room, movie theatre, outside balcony and gym, and numerous breakout spaces. Claremont completed the design and fit-out within 12 weeks and to budget.

"Myriad interior finishes, textures, shapes and colours blend effortlessly to create an inspirational working environment," agreed the judges. "The overall design was creatively developed through a high level of collaboration with the client. The result is stunning, with all available space fully and creatively utilised."



SILVER

HORBURY GROUP

Project: University of Birmingham Library

Architect: Associated Architects

Horbury carried out the supply and installation of brick slip cladding, internal drywall and plastering, suspended ceilings, hanging baffles, metal acoustic wall and staircase linings, hanging cylindrical baffles, door sets, skirtings, ceilings and soft floor finishes for the University of Birmingham Library. The £2.6m contract under main contractor Carillion took nine months and called for bespoke finishes across all trades and involving input from suppliers. The judges applauded the result. "A raft of interior products and finishes not only had to seamlessly integrate with each other, but also provide a high level of sound absorption throughout the multi-level complex. Horbury delivered an excellent, high-quality installation against challenging operational constraints."



GOLD

DSP (INTERIORS)

Project: KTM Sportmotorcycle UK, Northamptonshire

The project – to transform two commercial units at Silverstone Park into the new UK headquarters for KTM Sportmotorcycle – was declared by the judges an “excellent installation”. The project involved the creation of high-end dealership presentation facilities, shop front displays, training areas, mechanics workshops, offices, toilets, amenities and storage facilities. A large mezzanine floor was installed, and bespoke joinery included floating ceilings, feature walls, Corian hospitality units and a full-height storage wall. Energy-efficient lighting, lighting rafts, air conditioning with heat recovery ventilation, and workshop exhaust extraction was fitted throughout. The judges were impressed by the “high degree of client collaboration delivered to a commendable standard against a very tight programme”. “All this makes DSP deserved Gold Award winners.”



SILVER

QOB INTERIORS

Project: One Carter Lane, London
Architect: Studio Ben Allen

QOB completed the revamp of this 1,400m² office at One Carter Lane in nine weeks. The works involved creating office space, a reception area, executive meeting rooms and breakout space. The office area was decorated using Bolon flooring and bespoke furniture. A joinery tea point features a brass-covered worktop with integrated units, recycling stations, coat cupboards and storage units. And a joinery trellis and plants partition off the breakout area.

The judges said: “The challenge was not only to deliver a high-quality office installation but to achieve that with the most sustainable and environmentally friendly materials. The result: the first project in the UK to achieve BREEAM, SKA and WELL Building accreditation.”



GOLD

INTEGRA CONTRACTS

Project: 6 Pancras Square, London
Architect: AHMM Architects

"Precise attention to detail, design input, product sourcing and high quality of workmanship" were highlighted by the judges in this ceiling package at 6 Pancras Square, a new office development at London's Kings Cross.

The project involved the careful removal for reuse of 13 floors of existing Cat A ceilings to allow for full Cat B service installations.

Value engineering solutions had to keep within the client's strict environmental constraints on sourcing and use of materials, and the ceilings consisted of multiple bespoke constructions using a wide variety of base materials and designs.

The judges praised Integra's efforts: "A multiplicity of bespoke ceiling types, compositions and finishes all meld together to create a true ceiling 'experience'. The project features a wide range of bespoke constructions and one-off designs – perforated fire-rated MDF, folded aluminium profiles, acoustic absorbent board made from recycled bottles, perforated brass lighting boxes, stainless steel ceilings..."

"Resourcing environmentally appropriate materials remained a prime factor in the project."



SILVER

ASTINS

Project: Victoria & Albert Museum Exhibition Road Project, London
Architect: AL_A

The major development works for the Victoria & Albert Museum Exhibition Road project required a feature ceiling to complement the main gallery – a new 1,100m² underground exhibition space. Astins' in-house design team came up with a solution to the planned suspension system, a Sikla unistrut system, which the judges called "simply breathtaking". Key to the job – getting the line and level correct – was achieved using string lines and templates verified by an engineer. The judges acknowledged the challenge involved in this "huge 3D feature drywall". "The ceiling was installed some 8m above the column-free exhibition space and featured a myriad of triangular drylined 'wedges' stretching across the ceiling area."





GOLD
CLESTRA HAUSERMAN
Project: 10 Portman Square, London
Architect: Cleram



Clestra Hauserman was brought into this project to provide office partitioning for the fit-out of a 1,000m² London office space. The specification called for a fully glazed, flexible, curvilinear arrangement with flush, integrated timber door sets that achieved a high acoustic performance. Clestra used its 83mm M1 system, a lightweight partitioning system conceived as a glass skin stretched between a minimal framework – double-glazed to achieve the high acoustic separation required. It featured timber doors and an acoustic drop seal. The result was judged as “simply stunning”. “Unlike many office layouts, there was hardly a straight run in any part of this partition installation,” they said. “Each pane of glass had to be surveyed and installed in a minimal aluminium framework, so meticulous attention to detail was paramount.”

SILVER
MODA INTERIORS
Project: University of Birmingham, new library building
Architect: Associated Architects

Moda's installation involved the detailed design and installation of bespoke glazing and drywall construction, internal curtain walls and fire screens. Every screen was designed and detailed for its location to ensure the required fire ratings and acoustic performance were met. Significant challenges were present throughout the 18-month programme, from design stage to the detailed coordination of each screen ahead of other building trades being complete.

“Apart from being a complex installation, solutions were required to deal with the access, lifting and installation of large and heavy glass panels,” said the judges. “The finished installation is exceptional, demonstrating Moda's design and technical capabilities in demanding circumstances.”



GOLD

QUAD BUILDING SERVICES (SOUTHERN)

**Project: Victoria Embankment,
London**

Architect: TP Bennett

Quad's involvement in the redevelopment of Audit House at 58 Victoria Embankment left the judges in little doubt about its winning credentials – "Well done to Quad for their ingenuity, skill and excellent workmanship".

The judges acknowledged "the conundrum of designing and installing a seven-storey drywall feature originally specified as stone panels".

The move away from stone was essentially made for weight reasons, but Quad had to devise a solution that still looked like stone. It came up with a rendered drywall feature wall that stretched up through seven floors in the building atrium.

The added complication was the expansion joints required at each floor level while allowing for deflection, which meant the finished wall not only had to look good but perform well too.



SILVER

LAKESIDE CEILINGS AND PARTITIONS

Project: TATA Technologies, Warwickshire

Architects: Webb & Gray and Thuja Design

The aim of this open-plan office space was to enhance flexible working for employees and provide tenants with options for its day-to-day work. A striking atrium features numerous British Gypsum bulkheads around the perimeter, providing the backcloth to a full-height 3D-effect Hunter Douglas system installed vertically onto the drywall. "The commercial drywall element of this installation exhibited a high degree of workmanship," said the judges. "All wall linings and partitions featured a 15mm shadow gap around doorways and skirting, a detail that required an appreciable level of skill and dexterity. The whole installation was characterised by perfect lines and clear, crisp finishes, highlighted in the sloping bulkheads optimising the degree of light filtering into the workspace. Overall, a splendid project by Lakeside Ceilings and Partitions."



GOLD

STORTFORD INTERIORS (UK)

Project: Riverwalk Project, London

Architect: Stanton Williams

Stortford designed, supplied and installed the drywall and ceiling package for the Riverwalk project – a high-end residential development on the Thames. The interior linings and ceilings in both buildings mirror the curved exterior, and some of the internal partitions are a double curve in plan with different wall thicknesses at both ends. Stortford used off-site techniques, including pre-assembled CNC plywood wall templates – a process extended to the bathrooms. It also installed all

the electrical and data outlets in the units, facilitating the first and second fix on the party wall to save time.

"A key feature of the external elevations were the curves," agreed the judges, "a characteristic that had to be emulated with all the internal finishes. Using curved CNC templates manufactured off site ensured a more precise finish. Overall, an outstanding job successfully delivered under extremely challenging conditions."



SILVER

ERRIGAL CONTRACTS

Project: One Tower Bridge, London

Architect: Pete Taylor Associates

Errigal was appointed as the drylining contractor on three blocks at One Tower Bridge – a development of 151 five-star apartments on the Thames riverside, which range in value from £2m to £18m.

"Errigal did not disappoint," said the judges. "The quality of finish was particularly noticeable on the penthouse staircases and the GRG coffer detail throughout the project, which exuded huge levels of workmanship and meticulous attention to detail."

"Overall an excellent, high-quality installation delivered against an extremely testing time programme."

Awards | Steel-Framed Systems

GOLD

SCS BUILDING SOLUTIONS

Project: Victoria Gate, Leeds

Architect: ACME

SCS was contracted to carry out the design, manufacture, supply and installation of internal walls at the Victoria Gate Arcades. The project included SFS curved walls up to 8m high, forming shopfronts; drylining partitions to create shop units; sprayed insulated render to provide acoustic treatment; and the design, manufacture and installation of 4,600 GRG casts to form the main arcade feature.

"The original specification of plasterboard and timber had to be changed (there was no roof) to much more expensive options – a discrepancy overcome by collaboration between SCS, the main contractor and suppliers," applauded the judges. "The SFS faceted construction had to be surveyed, cut and fixed on site to create the striking curves and finishes in the arcade. The final effect is exceptional, highlighting the skill, ingenuity and lateral thinking SCS had to apply."



SILVER

ERRIGAL CONTRACTS

Project: Morello, Surrey

Architect: Axis Architects

As design and build contractor for the cladding on the Morello development of 389 apartments, Errigal's design team chose Gebrik insulated brick slip cladding to reduce groundworks costs. They also used a steel-frame system (SFS) to allow every possible increase in floor space.

"The SFS to support the insulated brick slip and aluminium clad facade, along with the sheer scale and height of the structure, posed many design and installation challenges," said the judges. "But using SFS provided a considerable saving in cost and time against more traditional methods. The project exhibited high-quality workmanship and ingenuity delivered within a challenging construction programme."

Awards | Plastering | Internal



GOLD (HUMBER SALVER)

TAYLOR HART

Project: Project FitzRoy, Northampton

FitzRoy House brings together the adolescent mental health services previously provided by St Andrew's Healthcare in two buildings. The two-storey facility gives specialised care for up to 110 young people in a building that will include therapy amenities (including a light workshop, horticulture, sensory integration and animal care courtyards), art rooms, music rooms and kitchens.

Taylor Hart completed more than 40,000m² of two-coat plastering to walls and 12,000m² skim finish to metal frame ceilings to achieve a finish of egg shell paint. The job was completed over a 16-month period, at times with 30 plasterers on site.

"This extensive plastering work was of excellent quality throughout," said the judges. "The superb standard maintained over the contract period bears testimony to the skill and dedication of the plasterers working on site."

"We understand that the blockwork substrate required a great deal of dubbing out to overcome inaccuracies during their construction."

SILVER

DAVID FISHER & SONS (EDINBURGH)

Project: Botanic Cottage, Edinburgh

This 200-year-old cottage was saved from demolition in 2008 and re-sited, stone by stone, in the grounds of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. David Fisher & Sons was appointed to execute the heritage plasterworks to the interior of the cottage. Works included lime plaster to the hard, lath and lime plaster and cornice works, performed by a team of four.

"The work was carried out with traditional materials – timber laths and three-coat lime plastering to the soffits and three-coat lime plastering to the walls," noted the judges.

"It was a joy to witness such skilled work in a remarkable heritage project."





GOLD (CRABB TROPHY)

G COOK & SONS

Project: New private residence, Oxfordshire

This private residence – the first UK project by US modernist architect Richard Meier – is described by the judges as “an iconic house that’s a statement in glass, stainless steel and plain white render”.

G Cook installed an insulated lime render to the main house and guest house, and an uninsulated version to various outbuildings and gardens walls. The rendering to the house comprises Foamglass insulation with three coats of natural hydraulic lime render to a total thickness of 13mm. The render is finished to exacting tolerances,



necessitating the dubbing out of the concrete background or a reduction in the thickness of the insulation.

The judges were highly impressed with the work. “There are no expansion or day joints in the render, which is flawless. The uninsulated areas of concrete walling had 20mm three-coat NHL render on stainless steel lathing. These areas are also flawless.

“G Cook & Sons are to be congratulated on the quality of the workmanship on this outstanding house.”



SILVER

CADONS

Project: Waitrose – Truro, Cornwall

The project – applying an insulated render system to a panel subframe with EPS profiles – involved a high level of detail to the profiles driven by the architect and the Duchy of Cornwall’s architect (Prince Charles).

As the judges said: “The rendering work to this Waitrose store had to comply with exacting aesthetic requirements. Cadons achieved this with the skilful fixing of Driangle stone profiles to the door and window openings, together with cornices, beads and copings. The jointing of these profiles was excellent and difficult to detect. The render was of very even texture and neatly finished. Raking sunlight did not expose any imperfections in the render. This work enhances a prestigious building exposed to close public scrutiny.”

CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE

ERRIGAL CONTRACTS – Vista Project, London



GOLD (HUMBER SALVER)
DAVID FISHER & SONS (EDINBURGH)
New Town Townhouse, Edinburgh

David Fisher & Sons delivered the fibrous plasterworks at this property. New cornices were created from scratch using enrichments from the firm's plaster samples. Four ceilings were designed, manufactured and installed in house. An oculus moulding within the cupola was fitted; new recessed panelling installed in the entrance hall and ground floor drawing room; and centrepieces designed and installed.

"The restoration of one of the last unaltered townhouses left in Edinburgh has been enhanced by the intricate plasterwork of David Fisher & Sons," declared the judges.

"From the sumptuous mouldings in the hall, the theme is repeated throughout the ground floor. The first-floor rooms are similarly resplendent, and include a drawing room with extensive and finely detailed cornice and ceiling enrichments.

"However, the pièce de résistance has to be the master suite ceiling on the second floor. Stepping in from a cheerless city street, the soul was lifted by this display of exemplary craftsmanship."

SILVER
GEORGE JACKSON
Project: Manor House, Newbury

George Jackson worked on the conservation and design of ornamental plasterwork for this 500-year-old manor house. The firm modelled, moulded, cast and installed five ceilings – three strapwork designs, one a grapevine design with bespoke corner details, the other a modern design with inset LED detailing. The project also involved the conservation of existing plasterwork and fibrous plaster detailing throughout.

"It was a pleasure to view this high-quality work," commented the judges. "The extensive conservation of existing plasterwork and cornices, and the development of five new ceilings were carried out to the satisfaction of the client and the conservation experts. The dining room ceiling was a delight with its extensive low-profile grapevine detail around the two chandeliers and in the corners."



Awards | Fibrous and GRG | New Build



GOLD (CRABB SALVER)

LOCKER & RILEY (FIBROUS PLASTERING)

Project: The Lanesborough Hotel, London

Architect: Reardon Smith Architects

Interior Designer: Alberto Pinto Interior Designers

Locker & Riley undertook the plasterwork to the public areas as part of the renovation of the grade II-listed Lanesborough Hotel. The firm came up with technical design solutions to incorporate integrated air conditioning grills and bespoke access panels (up to 2,600mm x 1,400mm in size) into complicated hand-sculpted fibrous plaster ceilings to create a seamless finish. The judges were stunned. "Locker & Riley are to be congratulated on producing what must be one of the very



finest entries ever submitted for the FIS awards for fibrous and GRG plastering. The work is superb and extensive – no two of the numerous public areas have the same design of plasterwork to their ceilings, walls, pilasters and columns. The ceilings have hidden access panels for air conditioning, which vent through concealed apertures incorporated in the cornices. The work is breathtaking, due to its intricacy of design, the quality of its execution and the quantity involved."



SILVER

FINE ART MOULDINGS

Project: Nazrin Shah, Oxford

Fine Art Mouldings' work comprised two fan-vaulted ceilings in this Oxford College theatre building. They both spring from a triangular, curved on plan, cast plaster proscenium beam. From this radiate 15 'fan ribs', increasing in width and depth as they rise over the auditorium, until they connect with 15 stone window mullions at the rear of the theatre. Likewise, 15 ribs radiate from this beam over the stage. The ribs reduce in height and width to a sharp point with the added complexity of a flash gap at the peak. While the ribs on the auditorium side were the same, the stage ribs were challenging – each different in size and shape, calling for 28 moulds just for this area. The judges were in no doubt: "It was a joy to view this project – of which this family-run company can be justifiably proud. Twenty-eight different moulds were required to cast a complete rib. The fixing and jointing is superb and faultless."



CERTIFICATES OF EXCELLENCE

DESIGN AND VISUAL CONCEPTS –
Heathrow Airport Terminal 4, El Al
Israel Airlines, King David Lounge

ERRIGAL CONTRACTS – Eldon
Square, Newcastle upon Tyne

Awards | Specialist Joinery

GOLD

BUSHCRAFTED

Project: Young Living, London

(Building 11, Chiswick Park)

Architect: Push Design

To this open-plan workspace – including display reception, curved glass meeting room, tea points, offices and meeting spaces – Bushcrafted contributed an “excellent joinery package, creatively conceived, designed and delivered”. The team installed an SAS System 330 and plasterboard ceilings and acoustic ceiling raft. Specialist manufactured and installed joinery also included reception desk, banquet seating, display tables and cabinets. “The project features an eclectic mix of timber species,” said the judges, “including oak, maple, walnut and cedar in a variety of applications that blend together. The reception area, which features bespoke joinery subtly illuminated, is a really inviting space.”



SILVER

PEXHURST SERVICES

Project: DTZ Investors, London

(21 Poland Street)

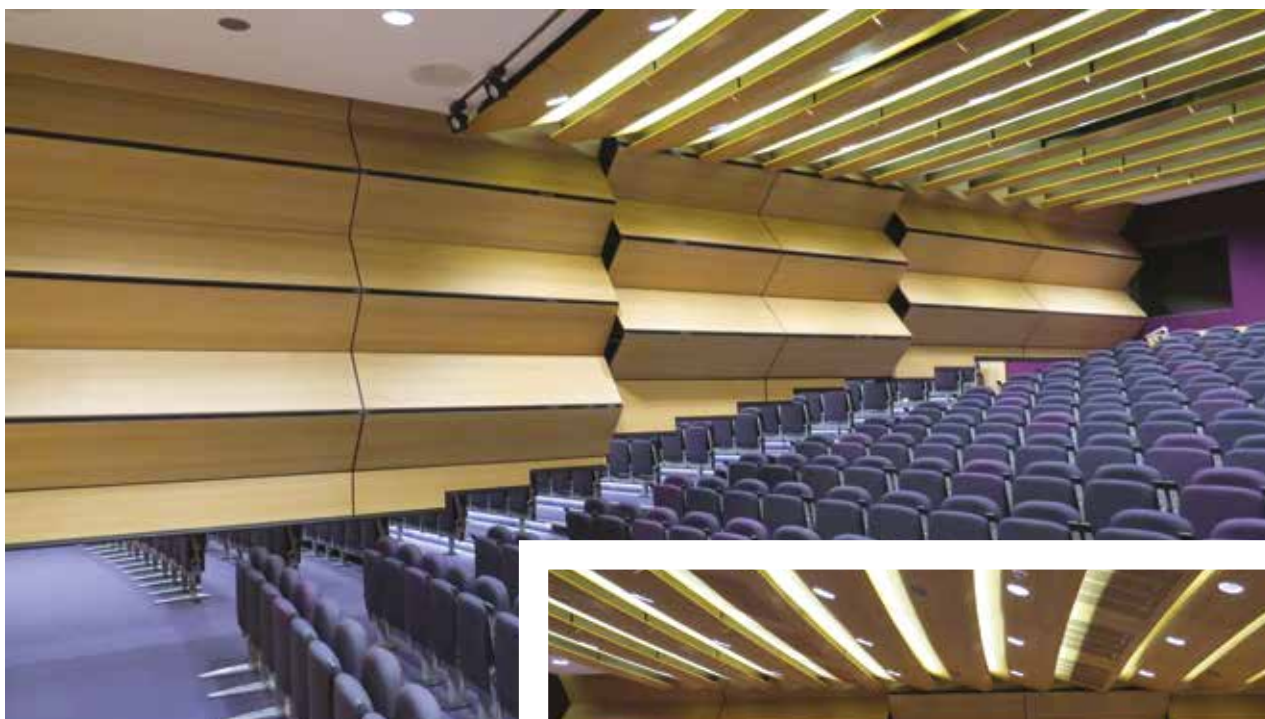
Architect: Tuffin Ferraby Taylor London

Pexhurst oversaw internal and external refurbishment works over five floors at this listed late Victorian office building. Within a 21-week programme, the contractor installed exposed air conditioning and electrical services, refurbished parquet flooring, insulated and drylined the walls and installed ceilings. A new reception area incorporated stone tiled floors and a marble feature. Lifts were installed and WCs on all five floors were refurbished.

The judges were impressed. “Pexhurst was required to virtually totally replace an existing multistorey internal staircase that had fallen into disrepair (pictured) – not only recreating the original design but also surveying, manufacturing and installing on site in very cramped conditions in a partially occupied office block.

“Perhaps the best compliment that can be paid to this joinery package is that it looks like it’s always been there.”

Awards | Operable Walls



GOLD

STYLE MOVEABLE PARTITION SPECIALISTS

Project: Francis Crick Institute, London

Architect: HOK

This project to subdivide a lecture theatre at the institute called for the installation of an acoustic folding wall system. Style's Skyfold system was adapted to form a stepped wall system. It had to incorporate free issue veneer to match the surrounding walls and align with all the perimeter details. The installation required close attention to detail to allow the client to subdivide the theatre at the touch of a button while linking with fire alarm interfaces and audiovisual controls. The



judges acknowledged "an extremely challenging and demanding installation". "Style's ingenuity provided an excellent finished product that produced an incredible sound performance between the two separate areas. A worthy winner."

SILVER

HUF COR UK

Project: Leicester Royal Infirmary clinical training facility

Hufcor developed a solution to provide clinical training areas for the University of Leicester at Leicester Royal Infirmary. The brief was to provide an open area that could be divided quickly to provide cubicles for training purposes, so movable wall panels were used, with electrically operated top/bottom seals and writeable dry-wipe panels.

The judges commented: "Electrically operated top/bottom seals mean the panels can then be manually folded back to the walls to provide the required layout. An excellent installation by Hufcor, which required an innovative extra-wide panel system to be installed in individual areas."



Awards | Judges Award

GOLD

WORKSMART CONTRACTS

Project: Ayr Gaiety Theatre, Ayrshire
Architect: Austin Smith Lord

Although this project had been submitted by Worksmart in the Interior Fit-out category, the nature and scope of the works made it more suitable for the Judges' Award. Worksmart worked with the client and the design team through a demanding 30-week programme to transform a derelict theatre into a venue where performances were due to be held the week after handover. Four floors and an auditorium were refurbished, including a new stage, in this listed building where rotten timbers, extreme water damage and severely damaged plastering were among the challenges. Most of the finishes had to be replaced, all existing seating stripped out and solid walls and ceilings reskimmed, reconfigured and repainted.

"This demanding project required an immense amount of precision, ingenuity and attention to detail," said the judges. "Active and productive collaboration with the client and the design team was paramount and helped deliver, on time, an excellent finished result."



GOLD

ATKIN TRADE SPECIALISTS

Project: Extra Care Housing, Dorset
Architect: NOMA Architects

Atkin is building a load-bearing light gauge steel frame structure for the new Extra Care facilities at Poundbury, Dorset. All detailing has been done by Metsec, using BIM-compliant modelling software, to integrate the structural and architectural details. This proved critical in the complex mansard roof configuration. All the cold-rolled steel was manufactured from this model and supplied to length and with holes pre-punched. The sections were then assembled into storey-height wall panels including rigid insulation. The finished panels were delivered to site and craned into position, saving time and cost.

The judges explained: "Arguably, this project should have been in the SFS Award category – but this is not SFS as we know it. When you consider that the complex loadbearing structural steel-framed panels were essentially fabricated off site and installed on site by five operatives over 30 weeks, you can see why Atkin Trade's excellent work is recognised with a Gold in this category."

Getting it right



Tom Barton has 40 years' experience working with John Mowlem and, for the past 18 years, with Sir Robert McAlpine, most recently as deputy regional manager for London and the SouthEast
tom.barton@getitright.uk.com

Tom Barton, a research leader with the new Get It Right Initiative, spells out the true cost of error

A recent research project carried out on behalf of CITB and over a dozen major contractors showed that the measured direct costs of avoidable errors are in the order of 5% of project value – or £5bn per annum – across the sector in the UK.

When unmeasured and indirect costs are included, the situation looks much worse, with estimates of total costs ranging between 10% and 25% of project cost, or between £10bn and £25bn per annum across the sector.

The cost of error is huge and is generally not recognised by industry. Companies that do recognise it have fantastic opportunities to improve their profitability and competitiveness, as well as use their resources more effectively.

The research demonstrates that the top 10 root causes of error were:

- Inadequate planning
- Late design changes
- Poorly communicated design information
- Poor culture in relation to quality
- Poorly coordinated design information
- Inadequate attention paid in the design to construction process
- Excessive commercial (financial and time) pressure
- Poor interface management and design
- Ineffective communication between stakeholders
- Inadequate supervisory skills.

In effect, the causes of error are a combination of inadequate culture, processes and skills.

The research also showed that the skills most needed to reduce error relate to planning, communication and supervision. This is true whether we are talking about trade skills or design skills.

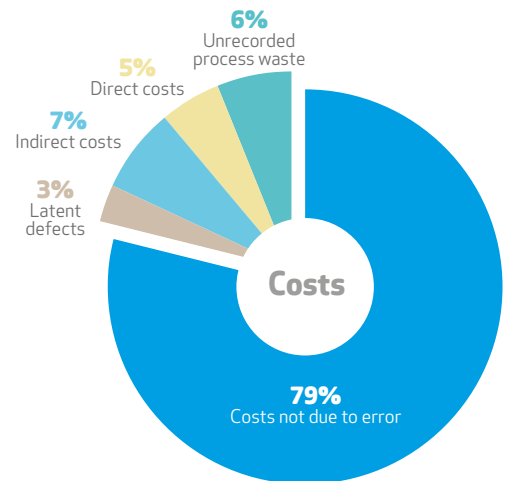
GETTING THE CULTURE RIGHT

It is critical that people want to do the job well. They need to have the right frame of mind and believe in what they do.

This applies as equally to the person making sure the site is fit for work by keeping it clean and tidy, as to the designer ensuring their details are unambiguous to eliminate error.

The goals of the Get it Right Initiative are:

- To change the attitudes of those involved in the sector so that they care about and focus on reducing the number of errors
- To improve the knowledge across the sector so that all involved properly understand how design



and construction processes can be disrupted and how this leads to error and waste

- To improve decision-making and planning skills across the sector so that all involved are able to react and adjust to unavoidable process disruption

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The initiative is a not-for-profit company supported by industry. Its aims and objectives include:

- A skills development programme
- A campaign to change and align attitudes across the sector
- Improved management processes and systems
- Improved construction technology and techniques

The Get It Right Initiative provides a real opportunity to drive down costs. It has already started holding workshops on how to eliminate avoidable error. Its website www.getitright.uk.com shows how you can support the initiative and could benefit by taking part in the campaign, sharing knowledge or taking part in workshops.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Tom Barton is speaking at the FIS Annual Conference on Thursday 9 November at the Hanbury Manor Marriott Hotel & Country Club, Hertfordshire. It will feature presentations and workshops on the Get It Right initiative.

How membership of the Get It Right Initiative can help

- Help reduce avoidable error
- Share expert knowledge and solutions
- Save you, your business, the industry and the taxpayer money
- Improve industry reputation, responsibility, rigour and respect
- Improve productivity
- Reduce wasted resources

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