

SPECFINISH

The magazine of FIS representing finishes and interiors



There's special interest in SFS

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WELL Building Standard **p10**

Skills: Delivering
Fit-Out Futures **p18**

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FIS

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Men working in construction at highest risk of suicide

Men working in the construction industry are at the highest risk of suicide, according to research from Public Health England.

The risk of suicide among low-skilled male labourers, particularly those working in construction roles, was three times higher than the male national average. For males working in skilled trades, the highest risk was among building finishing trades; particularly, plasterers and painters and decorators had more than double the risk of suicide than the male national average.

Unite acting general secretary Gail Cartmail said: "In the short term, we need to be raising awareness of the suicide risk in construction and explaining where workers can receive confidential support."

There were 18,998 suicides in men and women aged between 20 and 64 years between 2011 and 2015, which constitutes a rate of around 12 deaths for every 100,000 people per year.

Males working in the lowest-skilled occupations had a 44 per cent higher risk of suicide than the male national average; the risk among males in skilled trades was 35 per cent higher. Individuals working in roles as managers, directors and senior officials – the highest paid occupation group – had the lowest risk of suicide. Among corporate managers and directors, the risk of suicide was more than 70 per cent lower for both sexes.

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More price rises to come

Finishes and interiors contractors are battling with rising prices and they're braced for more to come. This month British Gypsum metal prices rise by 18 per cent and follow a series of price rises from other manufacturers because of the global increase in the price of steel, aluminium and wood combined with a fall in the value of the pound.

John Atkin, managing director of Bisley, the manufacturer of steel storage systems, said: "Steel costs have increased in the UK by over 60 per cent since the start of 2016, which is extremely difficult to recover in full from our existing customers. Unless steel reduces dramatically in the second half of the year, and the current forecasts do not indicate that this is likely, we shall have to increase our sales prices once again."

Neil Ash, managing director of Siniat, said on steel prices: "Recent price increases on drywall profiles are linked to a rise in the global cost of steel. Whilst the steel market has remained relatively stable over the last four years, we are beginning to see a more volatile situation as steel producers globally seek to increase prices. As a business, we always endeavour to mitigate the effects of these increases on our customers."

Mike Tapper, managing director at Tapper Interiors, said: "All manufacturers appear to be using these times of uncertainty to put up their prices as they have been unable to do so for some time. Subcontractors can do nothing other than add it to their rates and, ultimately, customers will have the last say as to whether they will pay for it."

Rising prices do not seem to be hampering activity and the growing demand for drywall systems has seen drywall manufacturers introduce allocations. An industry insider told *SpecFinish* that they were concerned that the shortage appears to have come about by a small increase in demand, asking: "What will ever happen if we get a serious upturn?"

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www.specfinish.co.uk

Housing growth slows

Business growth eased during March because of a slower housing sector despite a rebound in commercial work according to the Markit/CIPS UK Construction PMI survey.

March data revealed a slowdown in growth across the UK construction sector, led by a weaker rise in residential building activity. The survey pointed to only a marginal increase in new work, which contributed to slower employment growth and a slight decline in input buying. However, construction companies remain relatively upbeat about their near-term growth prospects.

Tim Moore at IHS Markit said: "A weaker trend

for residential work has been reported throughout 2017 so far, which provides an indication that the cooling UK housing market has started to act as a drag on the construction sector."

Duncan Brock, from the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply, said: "Pressure on suppliers remained intense as they battled against lower stocks and made greater efforts to fight the pincer movement of a shortage in some materials and the continued force of higher global commodity prices."

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FIS Skills showcases BuildBack programme with open day

FIS Skills celebrated its successful flagship BuildBack programme with an open day event at Tyne Metropolitan college last month.

The BuildBack programme puts job seekers through two weeks of college training followed by two weeks of on-site work experience with a local employer to equip them with the skills and competencies required to pursue a career in drylining.

BuildBack trainees put on a brilliant demonstration of skills learnt on the programme at the event, which was well attended with participation from all partners, employers and trainees.

Mary Glindon, MP for North Tyneside, attended the open day. She commented: "What I have seen here today is trainees building new skills and getting into a trade that will not just carry them forward in a job for life but also enable them to earn a high level of income."

Local employers in Newcastle can register their interest in the BuildBack programme by emailing skills@thefis.org

FIND OUT MORE

www.thefis.org/skills-hub



Omagh-based Coyle Suspended Ceilings scooped first prize in the Armstrong Ceilings Grid Off challenge at the NEC in Birmingham last month.

Kevin Coyle and Tom Goodfellow from Coyle were one of 16 pairs of Omega fitters that went head to head to install Armstrong's soon-to-be-launched TLS grid and Ultima+ board tile system in a 7.2m² rig erected in a 'boxing ring'.

Coyle installed the ceiling in 05:22:22, beating New Forest Ceilings to the first prize, a pair of Omega Seamaster Aqua Terra James Bond limited edition watches.

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www.gridoff.co.uk

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Editor's column

What next?

The supply chain is watching with interest to see what happens next. The finishes and interiors sector has shown strong optimism for future business opportunities since the events of 2016, although concerns do exist over the availability of skilled labour and rising costs are starting to feed through.

What everybody wants is some stability and clear water to be able to plan and deliver. However, now the trigger has been pulled to propel the UK out of the EU, the construction sector must keep an attentive eye on how the UK government's negotiations will play out and whether consumer and business caution returns to hamper further progress.

Pressure on specialists remains intense. They are battling against the pincer movement of shortages in skilled quality operatives, the introduction of allocations on some materials and the continued force of rising global commodity prices.

Nowhere has the fluctuation in prices seen the pressures grow more than in our sector. Some manufacturers appear to be using these times of uncertainty to put up their prices, as they have been unable to do so for some time. Specialists can do nothing other than add it to their rates; ultimately, it is their clients who will have the last say as to whether they will pay for it.

This is precisely the time when specialists need to differentiate their service offering and demonstrate where they add value in the construction life cycle. The popularity of steel framed systems (SFS) is one such area (see page 12). SFS is attractive to clients and designers who recognise that it leads to a speedy, safe, accurate and productivity-boosting solution on-site. But as the cost of steel rockets, its competitive position could be at risk.

I know what's next because history often repeats itself through economic cycles. Yet again our great industry faces the dilemma of wanting to change and evolve, yet escalating costs put the brakes on. The sector wants to avoid being perceived as an unskilled commodity service and, instead, demonstrate that finishes and interiors specialists offer unique value that brings time, quality and cost benefits to the construction process. The next question is how to do it in a changing business environment.

Adrian JG Marsh
Editor

Make hay while the sun shines

Spring is here and the sun coming out always generates a feeling of renewal. Members are reporting record levels of business activity and the summer appears to be set fair for the fit-out sector. The uncertainties around Brexit are some way off and for the most part out of our control – they will be what they will be.

We've been saying for some time that there are three time bombs facing the sector: 1) Brexit's impact on EU migrant labour; 2) the age of the workforce; and 3) employment status of our workers being under threat. Having surveyed our members, we now know this is true and have the evidence to back it up. There are some fairly shocking but unsurprising statistics here. About half our members are neither claiming grant nor employing an apprentice. The green CSCS card is still held by the majority of operatives. These are positions that cannot continue without having a severe impact on the future wellbeing of companies in the sector. Now is the time to act. We simply have to attract more new entrants who don't come from the EU. Although the supply tap may not immediately turn off when Brexit happens, the supply will surely be limited and probably come with a price tag (an administrative visa system).

There is little doubt that the complexity of the training landscape makes the whole process far more painful than it should be. The FIS Skills team are working hard on delivering ways to simplify and reduce the cost of training. We've already developed CourseSight to automate booking courses, updating CSCS cards and, most importantly, paying the CITB grant without filling in a form. We're also aligning a whole load of different schemes to attract new entrants so that they look the same to you as an employer. This will make it easier for you to locate and recruit new people for your business. Once you have them, we'll help you manage them so you can get on with managing your business.

One of the key ambitions of FIS has been to



gain Consensus status within CITB. The news that this has been achieved is a great boost and demonstrates the rising profile of FIS. This new position will mean we can conduct our own vote on retaining the training levy this summer. We will be canvassing your opinions throughout the spring and summer to ensure we accurately reflect your views.

Skills and training is at the forefront of our strategy but the skills required can only be applied where there are robust technical standards. There is a lot of work going on in the technical forums. The work of the new SFS Forum on updating guidance on the design and installation of SFS systems, in collaboration with the Steel Construction Institute, will be out in the summer. And our work on updating the B544 series of standards on drylined and glazed partitions with the BSI will deliver objective and clear technical standards that are achievable and will be to the benefit of everyone: clients, contractors and manufacturers.

We now have members representing the FIS and your interests on the CITB Council, Build UK leadership groups and chairing BSI committees. Our influence is growing and we need more of you to help us to help you. Come along to the members' meetings and technical forums to put across your views. Contact FIS Skills to get a Training Needs Analysis completed to set your business up for the future.

Spring is here, summer is coming – make hay while the sun shines.

DAVID FRISE

FIS chief executive

www.thefis.org

FIS becomes CITB Consensus Federation

We were very pleased to receive notification last month from CITB confirming that we are now one of 14 Consensus Federations, meaning we can hold our own vote in the consensus process.

Putting a stop to fire with careful design and specification

CCF's insulation category group manager, **Annemarie Shotton**, explains the ramifications of bad building design and poor product specification, and highlights what lessons can be learnt from safety failings gone by.

The cost of not properly planning for a fire hazard can cost lives, as well as incur fines and the risk of imprisonment for those responsible. While these consequences are steep, unfortunately cases of non-compliance are discovered all the time.

A recent example of a fire which could have been slowed down, allowing occupants more time to escape, is the 2009 Southwark Council tower block blaze. The investigation has now come to a conclusion and officials have been

fined £570,000 for their failures, which contributed to the deaths of six people who were trapped inside.

To prevent the rapid spread of fire in buildings, designers and contractors have a duty to follow the Building Regulations and Regulatory Reform Order (Fire), which work together to protect occupants. Manufacturers and distributors can help to ensure the correct products are specified and give proof of traceability to national standards. Retrospective

checking can mean that even after this process, buildings could not be signed off if errors are found – so it is important to get it right first time.

Considering the Southwark Council case, it is clear to see that a number of fatal errors were allowed to go by unnoticed: the failure to make a fire risk assessment, which allowed breaches of fire-resistant structures; the lack of compartmentation in the false ceiling structures of common corridors; and other simple steps,

such as fitting intumescent strips and smoke seals around doors.

For those in the construction industry, including specifiers, architects and designers who must ensure plans properly factor fire risks, to the contractors and installers who rely on manufacturers and distributors to ensure that the correct products, such as smoke and fire barriers, fire-rated boards and more are traceable to national standards, we can all recognise the burden of not choosing quality at every stage of the supply chain. Therefore, it is the responsibility of us all to make sure fire safety is at the forefront of what we do.

ANNEMARIE SHOTTON

CCF

Insulation category group manager
www.ccfltd.co.uk




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Weber EWI improves Stevenage homes

External Wall Insulation (EWI) by Saint-Gobain Weber has been specified for a proportion of homes in the extensive property upgrade programme being carried out by Stevenage Borough Council in Hertfordshire.

Main contractor Wates Living Space specified Weber EWI to meet the thermal efficiency requirements and deliver the desired aesthetic treatments for the homes, which were constructed in the late 1940s/early 1950s.

To achieve a U-value of 0.30 W/m²K, down from the original 1.98 W/m²K, webertherm XM EWI with 90mm EPS insulation was installed with a high-performance weberend LAC render, followed by a coat of weber PR310 primer before an application of weberplast TF decorative finish.

www.netweber.co.uk

New metal ceiling option from Knauf AMF

Knauf AMF has introduced AMF Mondena, its new metal ceiling system.

Working closely with architects and interior designers, Knauf AMF has explored the aesthetic and functional possibilities offered by metal to create its new range of high-quality acoustic metal ceilings.

Metal ceiling tiles provide many advantages, including quick and easy demounting for maintenance, a smooth and robust surface that's easy to keep clean and having a very long product life.

AMF Mondena is available in a choice of dimensions, individual shapes, edges, face patterns and colours to enable the creation of unique designs that express creativity.

www.knaufamf.com



Fade Acoustic Ceilings – new to the UK

CMS Danskin Acoustics has announced an exclusive agreement with Scandinavian Fade Acoustic Ceilings to bring its acoustical plaster solutions to the UK.

Fade's high-performance plaster solutions provide seamless and beautiful finishes that can be installed on curved and domed surfaces and vaulted ceilings. The Fade Acoustical Plaster ceiling system brings together high-value aesthetics and acoustic performance and is well-suited to historic buildings through to high-end commercial developments.

By absorbing sound waves, the Fade plaster system reduces reverberation time, providing the highest level of sound-absorption. The system consists of a mineral fibre board which is overlaid with acoustical plaster. It can be installed directly onto an existing ceiling grid or on a suspended steel construction with no requirement for a plasterboard layer.

www.cmsdanskin.co.uk



New Ocula partitioning brand revealed

New partitioning brand Ocula Systems has been unveiled to the industry at launch events in London and Manchester.

The Ocula Systems range has been built on the foundation of the Tenon and System 8000 product ranges. It is available, with specialist design and installation support, through eight regional hubs in Twickenham, Burgess Hill, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Cardiff, Dublin and Glasgow. The new Ocula brand is also available through the SIG Interiors branch network.

Kye Edwards is Ocula Systems' business development director. He commented: "The product range already includes innovative glass, solid wall and door options and our plan is well underway to introduce even more product additions during 2017."

www.oculasystems.co.uk

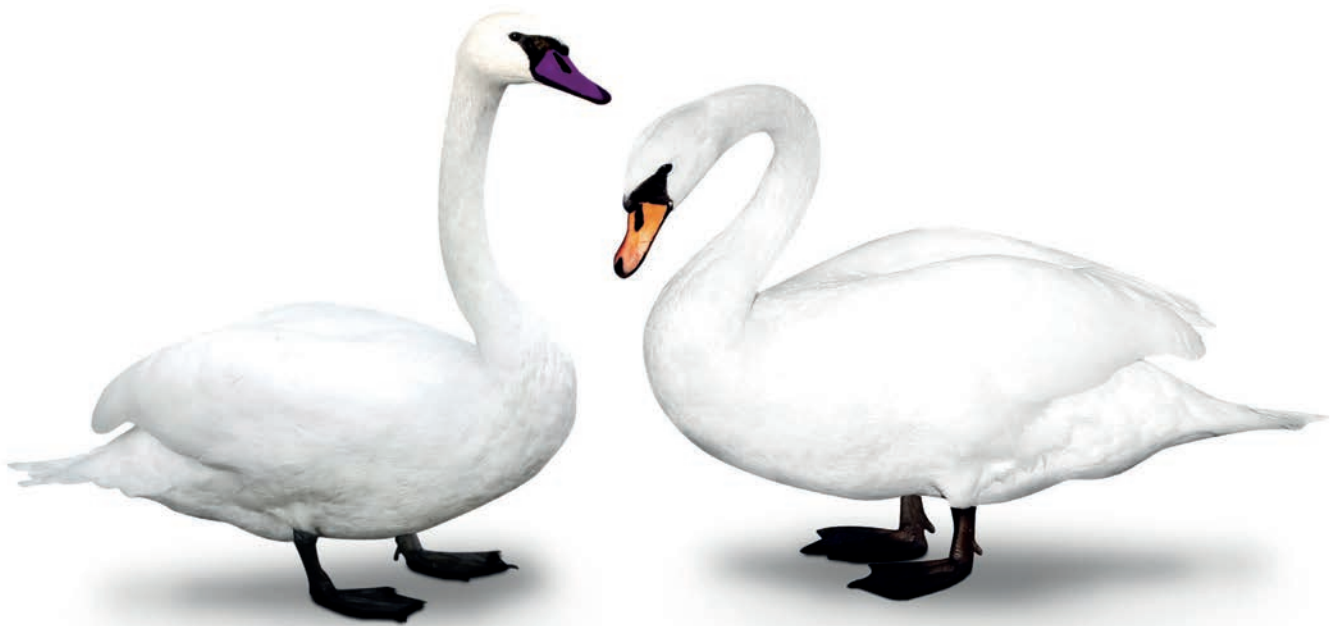
New Thistle Bonding 60 makes quicker work of patching and repair

British Gypsum has developed Thistle Bonding 60, an undercoat plaster that decreases setting time by as much as two thirds. This allows patching and repair jobs to be completed in half the time of those using standard undercoat plaster.

This innovative product has all the attributes of original Thistle Bonding Coat plaster but with a much shorter setting time of just 60 minutes, meaning it's ready to finish in 75 minutes. And this means tradespeople could potentially double their productivity on repair work.

Thistle Bonding 60, which is available in a 10kg tub or 12.5kg and 25kg bags, joins British Gypsum's existing Thistle One Coat and Gyproc Easi-Fill products to create a new trade patching range.

www.british-gypsum.com



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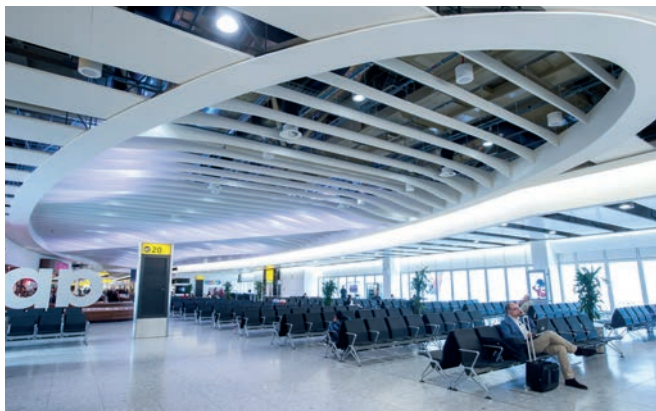
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Acoustic baffles from SAS International

SAS500 ceiling baffles from SAS International, shown here in a striking design at Heathrow Terminal 4, provide Class A absorption for effective acoustic control in open soffit areas.

Over 2,000m² of acoustic baffles were supplied for Terminal 4's departure lounges with LED lighting strips installed on brackets, supported by the baffles, to enhance the wave effect.

SAS International's SAS500 baffles are ideal for exposed soffit areas and available in a range of colours, shapes and sizes, helping to create visual interest. Individual baffles are factory-assembled off-site, ready for delivering to site. Another baffle option are long continuous runs which are supplied loose for on-site assembly.

www.sasint.co.uk

Beissier's ACÉNIS plasters and fillers keep indoor air clean

Beissier has unveiled a new range of plaster and filler solutions specifically designed to improve indoor air quality. The move follows the introduction of ACÉNIS plaster and filler, which includes an active formula that captures volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and prevents their re-emission into the atmosphere.

Beissier's R&D team developed ACÉNIS after recognising the potential harmful effects that formaldehyde, a VOC, can have on health and wellbeing. This new ACÉNIS formula from Beissier, which now comes as standard in its Bagar Airliss G and Prestonett F plaster filler, captures formaldehydes and neutralises them, helping to keep indoor air clean.

Aaron Barbeau from Beissier said: "People in the UK spend, on average, 80 per cent of their lives in enclosed spaces, so indoor air quality is critical for their health and wellbeing. Formaldehydes are emitted from everyday items including furnishings and cleaning products. While they're not a problem in small doses, prolonged exposure can cause health issues.

"ACÉNIS destroys formaldehyde molecules and offers long-term protection against indoor air pollution, making it the ideal plaster and filler solution for schools and hospitals which are regularly used by vulnerable groups, and commercial offices and hotels which are occupied for prolonged periods."

www.beissier.eu

Baumit's self-cleaning technology helps keep buildings looking clean



A special photocatalyst additive developed by building materials manufacturer Baumit uses the power of light to activate the self-cleaning effect in its Nanopor range of renders and paints.

Self-cleaning products often rely on rain or moisture contact to maintain a healthy-looking facade, but Baumit's Nanopor systems require just sunlight, humidity and wind to provide a uniform, dirt-free surface.

The effect is produced when sunlight activates the photocatalysis additive in the Nanopor render or paint, affecting the upper-hydrophilic nano layer within the product while it dries. During this process, dirt is decomposed and lifted from the surface by air movement, with any remaining particles removed by rain and evaporation to leave a clean facade.

Within the range, Baumit NanoporTop is a ready-to-use, dirt- and pollution-repellent render for new build or renovation projects which can be hand or machine applied.

www.baumit.com

New slimmed down moveable wall system from Style



Style, the exclusive UK distributor for DORMA partitioning walls, has unveiled a new moveable wall system that takes acoustic integrity to a new level.

The DORMA Variflex 88 boasts improved sound insulation of up to Rw 58dB but with a reduced wall thickness of just 88mm. This is approximately 12 per cent thinner than other comparable walls.

Alongside improved acoustics, the lightweight Variflex 88 demands less stringent structural requirements and is easier to slide into place. When not in use, the thin panels take up less floor area than other systems, discreetly tucking into a small niche.

The Rw 58dB acoustic performance has been achieved by primarily changing the construction of the frame. Sound bridges have been avoided and the structure has been created with a low overall vibration rate, ensuring every panel functions like an optimised sound buffer.

Variflex 88 can also be completely automated using the DORMA ComfortDrive system.

www.style-partitions.co.uk

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A fit-out that's Europe's first to the WELL Building Standard

Fit-out specialist and FIS member QOB Interiors has delivered a 'gold' level performance in the fit-out for multi-disciplinary engineer Cundall at One Carter Lane, Europe's first building to gain the WELL Building Standard (WELL).

Opposite St Paul's Cathedral in the heart of the City of London, the 15,400 sq. ft office at One Carter Lane takes up the entire ground floor of the mid-nineties building and provides new workspaces for more than 180 employees. Cundall chose to create an exemplar project, not only to ensure its staff would be as happy, healthy and productive as possible, but also as a showcase for its clients and collaborators.

As part of this aim, the company pursued the WELL Building Standard (WELL), a performance-based system administered by the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI) which measures human health and wellness, based on seven categories of building performance: air, water, light, nourishment, fitness, comfort and mind.

From a design by architects Studio Ben Allen, the project saw QOB Interiors deliver the challenging Cat B commercial office fit-out to stringent tolerances with

a focus on the most sustainable and environmentally-friendly materials. Every aspect of the fit-out – from materials used to lighting, heating and open space – had to be thoroughly considered as to the impact on post-occupancy use before the design was finalised.

The specification of materials under WELL meant only those that had a very low concentration of formaldehydes and volatile organic compounds (VOC) could be used. The VOC rating of all materials had to be between negligible and zero, ensuring that office fixtures, fittings and fabric do not expel harmful chemical or organic emissions. Medical research has shown that indoor air quality has a major influence on the health, wellbeing and productivity of building occupants.

At the Cundall offices, all furnishings, insulation, interior paint, adhesives, oils, waxes, varnishes and finishes were specified for low or

zero VOC, formaldehyde and toxic content. To maintain the air quality in high density areas, variable volume air distribution is controlled by CO2 sensors.

Natural materials including solid oak cupboard doors and edging, birch ply desks and timber shelving were installed by QOB throughout the office while a recycled, woven nylon floor tile from Swedish manufacturer Bolon was specified for the flooring and fitted with a low VOC adhesive.

With the constant monitoring and testing of indoor air quality under WELL so critical throughout the fit-out, QOB had to ensure that there were precautions in place to isolate works areas to ensure any dust was contained, preventing contamination entering into other areas of the site. In addition, dust covers were used on light fittings and airtight plastic covers on all grilles, filters, ducts and fan coil units.

Commenting on the fit-out, David Phillips, project manager at QOB Interiors, said: "This has been one of the most rewarding fit-outs we have done. The WELL Building Standard was uncharted territory

for all of us, but we had the support of an excellent design team and a collaborative client which resulted in us being able to deliver the fit-out to an exceptionally high standard and within a tight timescale."

Other wellbeing measures in this environmentally-aware fit-out carried out by QOB included the installation of a water filtration system which goes beyond the normal level of potable water and is tested against dissolved minerals, chemicals and microbes. Two ventilated living green walls of reindeer moss were another feature, improving air quality and increasing occupant comfort, while efficient lighting had infra-red occupancy detection and daylight dimming controls.

Such are the impressive sustainability credentials of the Cundall offices at One Carter Lane that the project has also achieved BREEAM Excellent and SKA Gold ratings.

At the One Carter Lane office, the QOB Group has helped Cundall create an office environment which will set a high benchmark for the workplace, putting people's health and wellbeing at the very heart of the building.



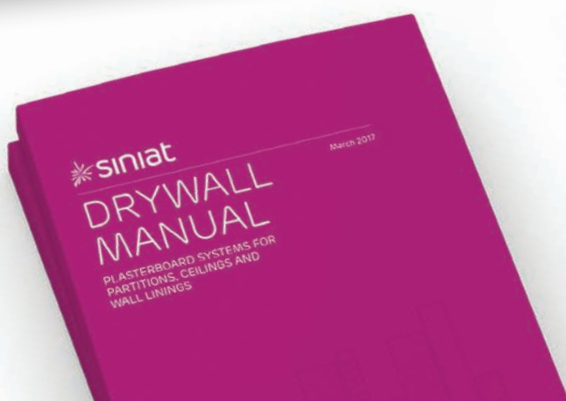


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Nine Elms Point, London, where Stanmore has installed SFS at the new residential complex.

There's special interest in SFS

In recent years, the popularity of steel framed systems has spiralled. Now, FIS is working to increase that profile and make sure the specification of such systems is kept up to date. **Paul Thompson** reports.

This popularity for steel framed systems (SFS) seems to know no bounds. There is hardly a site in the country that isn't using the construction method in some form.

Many architects and designers have quickly cottoned on to its attractions, recognising that the quality of the SFS off-site manufacture leads to a speedy, safe, accurate and efficient solution on-site. From small eco-friendly housing developments to large commercial new build office projects, SFS has a proven track

record of delivery.

In a move intended to keep the focus on its use, FIS has teamed up with partners from all areas of the industry to create an SFS Special Interest Forum aimed at promoting the method and ironing out technical issues that can arise.

"From the off we wanted to form a group that would advance the use of SFS and raise its profile," explained Colin Kennedy, managing director of installer Veitch Interiors and chairman of the SFS Forum.

"We recognised that there would be some issues that needed to be addressed and we are delighted with the progress that has been made so far," he added.

One of the main issues the forum was hoping to look at was the specification and measurement of SFS systems. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' (RICS) 'New Rules of Measurement' (NRM) omits SFS, and its description under the NBS specification clauses was causing confusion and

difficulty for those tasked with comparing tender prices.

Mr Kennedy explained: "We were getting feedback from main contractors that highlighted this issue. They would complain that it was difficult for them to compare like for like. One specialist would measure in sq. m gross while others in sq. m net. We realised that this needed sorting out quickly."

Thankfully, appeals to those at RICS have resulted in an understanding that the next updates of the NRM will include SFS-specific entries, a move which should at least go some way to easing confusion.

But the purpose of the SFS Forum doesn't stop there. It is working alongside industry body the Steel Construction Institute (SCI) to update and then jointly promote its technical guidance 'Design and Installation of Light Steel External Wall Systems' with a view that this becomes the go-to document for those involved in the design, specification and installation of SFS systems.

Peter Baker, director of operations at finishing contractor Stanmore, said: "We have invested heavily on the design side and have 25 in-house designers. We also have specialist

gangs that are experienced and trained specifically to install SFS. We offer in-house training, but the guidance from the SFS Forum will be beneficial."

It is a thought with which Tom McLoughlin, CEO at MACS Plasterboard Systems, concurs. "We generally have installers who work specifically on SFS. We can upskill our internal system installers but we like to keep the two separate. Any extra guidance would be useful," he added.

Currently, training is driven by the system manufacturers. Kingspan and Metsec are two of the largest and offer training courses suited to their products. They also help to 'police' projects through the on-site inspections demanded by their guarantee schemes.

For some, though, the added draw of having FIS on board to help drive the SFS Forum is crucial. Stephen Napper, director of light gauge steel design consultant MMC Engineer, is one of them.

"Ideally, there would be some level of standardisation across the industry. It happens with structural steel, so why not light gauge? I don't think that will happen, but we desperately need the specification issues sorting and really need all main contractors to look at truly partnering with their SFS subcontractors," he said.

"I really hope that we will be able to look back and say 'that was a moment of change'. There is no reason why that shouldn't be the case," he added.

Colin Kennedy is adamant the SFS Forum will deliver a publication for the new design guidelines later this year.

"We have had some constructive input so far. We want this to be the ideal package. I would like to think that we can continue to work closely on the draft guidance and get the full package ready by mid-summer," he concluded.

For many, summer can't come soon enough.

Mansell Finishes wraps up complex SFS project for Unite Students

Mansell Finishes has completed an impressive seven-storey pre-panelised SFS project at the new Unite Students Coventry accommodation and retail development for main contractor Bowmer & Kirkland.

The £1.4 million project took 25 weeks to complete. Far from being a straightforward off-site SFS build, the project included ambitious complex shapes, a tight curved facade, pitched and flat areas of roof, and curved corners, requiring a high level of experience and expertise in SFS construction techniques.

Mansell dealt with the curved, complex shapes and tight curved facade using short, straight sections of Metsec Metframe panels that created a faceted elevation to form an effective curved solution.

Pre-panelisation of the frames was undertaken at Mansell's production facility in Manchester then delivered to site in the correct erection sequence.

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Looking ahead to meeting Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

Kingspan Insulation's head of technical and product development, **Adrian Pargeter**, highlights the benefits of Internal Wall Insulation for improving the energy performance of buildings ahead of the new minimum requirement being introduced next year for leased properties.

With less than a year until the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) come into force, the time to upgrade the energy performance of our existing buildings is now. The new legislation, which will be introduced on 1 April 2018, prevents the lease of any commercial or domestic property with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) lower than E across England and Wales.

Moreover, in the long term, the government has also announced its commitment to lifting all fuel-poor homes to an EPC of at least a C by 2030. While the pressure is on for local authorities, housing associations and private owners to invest in long-term solutions, the opportunities for contractors are numerous.

Insulation solutions

While improving the thermal performance of cavity-walled buildings is reasonably straightforward, for the 45 per cent of fuel-poor dwellings that are solid-walled or hard-to-treat (as defined in the government report Fuel Poverty: changing the framework for measurement, first published in September 2012), External Wall Insulation (EWI) or Internal Wall Insulation (IWI) applications are the only answer.

Obviously, EWI applications are a far simpler choice from an installer's point of view. However, there are

some circumstances where IWI may be more desirable, or even the only option. For example, work on a property located within one of the thousands of conservation areas across Britain is subject to specific planning restrictions. The restrictions are contained within article 4 directions from the local planning authority and will typically prevent the substantial changes to the front exterior of properties required for EWI applications. Meanwhile, homeowners living outside of conservation zones may also wish to avoid EWI installations to retain the original aesthetic of their homes.

IWI applications avoid the need for external alterations and can also make homes more responsive to heating systems. This is because the heat is retained directly within the room, rather than being stored in the walls (which gives longer heat retention but also takes longer to heat up). As such, it can provide a more effective solution for heating individual rooms. This may be helpful for people who prefer to only heat whichever room they are occupying.

The obvious drawback with IWI installations, however, is the impact they can have on living space within the property. It is therefore critical to find insulation products with the lowest lambda value (thermal conductivity), allowing the best possible thermal performance with a minimal thickness of insulation.



Saving space and time

Rigid phenolic insulated plasterboard systems are an excellent solution for IWI applications, offering a number of key benefits to installers and end users. The products typically combine insulation, drylining and vapour control in a single board that can be cut to size with a fine-toothed saw, simplifying the installation process.

The boards are well known for their excellent thermal performance, and the latest developments in insulated plasterboards can now achieve a lambda value of just 0.018 W/m.K. This allows the desired U-value to be achieved with a minimal thickness of insulation.

For example, take a typical solid wall construction with 102.5mm brickwork where the original plasterboard has been stripped back and timber battens fitted at 600mm centres. Here, a 112.5mm thickness of rigid phenolic insulation plasterboard is all that is required to achieve an external wall U-value of 0.17 W/m².K, creating a warmer, healthier environment for occupants while retaining as much living space as possible.

However, it is not just down to the selected product. As highlighted in the recent government report Each Home Counts (published in December 2016), detailing and quality of workmanship are fundamental to effectively improving our existing

housing stock. When installing insulation internally, it is crucial to carefully plan the work, paying close attention to areas such as junctions around the doors, windows, floors and ceilings. Insulation manufacturers typically provide information on correct detailing.

Looking ahead

In light of its findings, the Each Home Counts review recommends the introduction of a quality mark for all companies working within the energy efficiency field. This development suggests that the contractors who will benefit the most from the opportunities created by the impending MEES, and in the future as the industry becomes more energy conscious, will be the ones that can demonstrate a clear dedication to achieving these high standards.

Investing in industry-recognised training programmes which focus on IWI applications is essential to ensuring all IWI installations meet the requirements and have the correct level of detailing. This will help to build a strong reputation going forward while, along with the right insulation product, providing a long-term solution to the inefficient energy performance of many existing properties.

FIND OUT MORE

Kingspan Insulation Limited
www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk



Final account applications – the importance of the payer notice

Professor Rudi Klein Barrister reviews more cases on the topic of payment and focuses on the legalities of final account applications.

The setting for the case of *Kilker Projects Ltd (Kilker) v Rob Purton t/a Richmond Interiors (Purton)* was the palatial splendour of the Dorchester Hotel in Park Lane, London. Purton had entered into an oral, or word of mouth, contract with Kilker for specialist joinery works at the hotel. It should be noted that this was an oral contract for works (including variations) that were ultimately valued at almost £800,000. The dispute between the parties was about the sums due in respect of the final account.

The facts

Purton had submitted its final account application to Kilker. Kilker had not responded with either a valid payment notice or pay less notice, as is required by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the Construction Act). Following Kilker's failure to pay the amount applied for, Purton referred the matter to adjudication. In the absence of valid payment notices and/or pay less notices, the adjudicator decided – in accordance with the amended Construction Act – that the amount applied for had to be paid by Kilker. Kilker duly paid £147,223.00 plus the adjudicator's fees and expenses.

But Kilker did not leave things there. It felt that it had overpaid Purton. It then launched its own adjudication with the aim of establishing the true value of the final account and securing repayment of any overpaid sums. The adjudicator granted a declaration that the true value of the final account was £745,709 and that Purton would have to repay £55,676 plus VAT. Purton didn't pay and Kilker issued proceedings to enforce the decision.

The arguments in court

Kilker's position was that the statutory payment notice procedure was primarily concerned with improving cashflow. But it was not aimed at deciding contractual entitlement to payment on a conclusive basis. It could go to adjudication at the end of the job to obtain a decision on the other party's proper entitlement under the contract.

Purton's defence was that Kilker's failure to issue a payment notice and/or a pay less notice meant that Kilker had, in effect, agreed the valuation for that payment cycle and must therefore pay the application in full. Such agreed valuation could not be re-opened in a subsequent adjudication, although it could be challenged by Kilker in any subsequent litigation or arbitration.

Purton was relying upon passages in a judgement of one of the earlier cases on payment notices, *ISG Construction Ltd v Seevic College* in 2014. In that case, the judge held that in the absence of any payment notices, the amount in the contractor's application is deemed to be the value of the works included within the application and the sum applied for must be paid, and that if the payer fails to serve any notices in time it must be assumed that it has agreed the amount applied for, right or wrong.

Therefore, the first adjudicator must have decided the value of the work included in the application.

In a later case (*Galliford Try Building v Estura Ltd*), the same judge decided to clarify his position. A paying party can challenge the value of work by, if necessary, revising it downwards following the next application. In the 2015 case of *Matthew Harding t/a MJ Harding Contractors v Paice*, the Court of Appeal decided that a payer could determine in adjudication the valuation of the final account following termination of the contract (despite the fact that there was an earlier adjudication in which the adjudicator ordered payment of the contractor's application because of failure by the payer to serve a valid pay less notice).

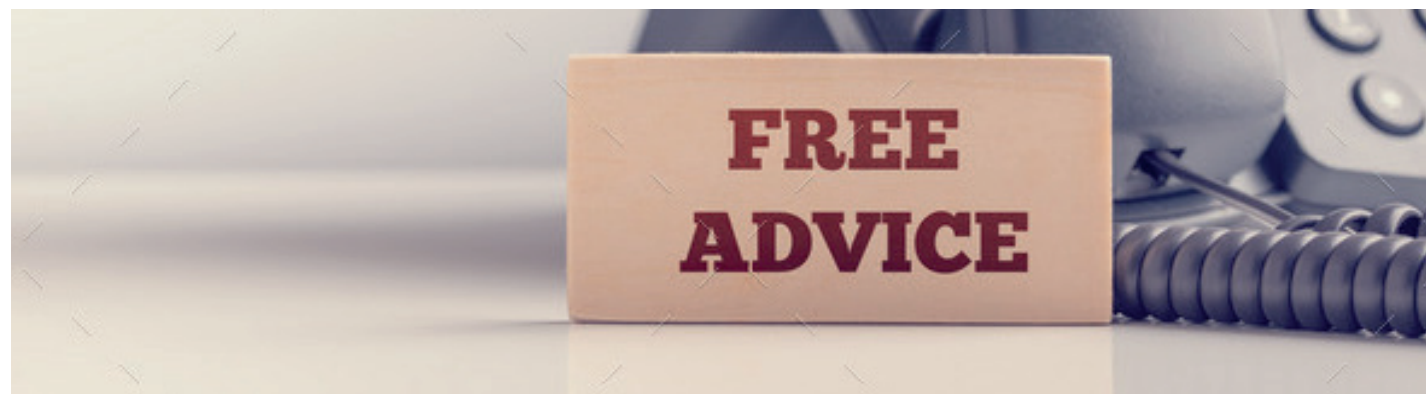
The judge's decision

The judge confirmed that the statutory payment provisions do not affect the ultimate value of the contract sum that the parties have agreed as the price for the work and/or services to be provided. The judge stated: "They are concerned only with cashflow and not the contract sum."

The first adjudication determined that the application had to be paid in the absence of any payment notice. Kilker had to pay the full amount in the application. But that adjudication was not about determining the proper value of the final account. In this case, therefore, the adjudicator had jurisdiction or the power to determine the dispute and his decision should be enforced.

Conclusion

This case reinforces the message emerging from other payment cases that failure by a payer to issue valid payment and/or pay less notices means that the amount applied for must be paid (providing the application is issued in accordance with the contract and sets out the sum due and the basis on which it is calculated). If the payer believes that an overpayment has been made this can be rectified in subsequent payment cycles. As far as final account applications are concerned then, the payer has the right (subject to anything in the contract to the contrary) to refer any disputes for the valuation of the final account to adjudication.



Subcontractor liability for acts and omissions

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Bond Dickinson

Kara Price, a lawyer within Bond Dickinson's specialist construction team, reviews a recent judgement which is very topical for subcontractors.

Main contractor Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd (Willmott Dixon) appointed Robert West Consulting Ltd (Robert West) to design the underpinning of a shared gable wall. Willmott Dixon subcontracted the underpinning itself to Toureen Contractors Ltd (Toureen).

The party wall allegedly suffered damage as a result of the underpinning. Willmott Dixon brought a claim against Robert West, alleging Robert West's design had been defective, causing delay and loss. One of Robert West's defences was that the damage had partially been caused by Willmott Dixon's contributory negligence, on the basis that Toureen had been negligent.

The general rule of contributory negligence is that a main contractor is not liable for the negligence of its independent subcontractors except where:

1. the main contractor has actual knowledge that the subcontractor's work has been done in a foreseeably dangerous way and condones it; and
2. the main contractor owes a "non-delegable duty", i.e. a duty to procure the careful performance of the works by its subcontractor which it cannot delegate to anyone else.

Robert West initially based its defence on the first exception; however, it later applied to the court to amend its defence alleging that Willmott Dixon was vicariously liable for Toureen's alleged negligence.

The court held that Robert West's arguments had no prospect of success because:

- vicarious liability does not extend to independent subcontractors; and
- the question really was whether Willmott Dixon owed a "non-delegable duty" to Robert West. The court also rejected Robert West's arguments in this respect.

The case is a good reminder of when a main contractor will, and will not, be liable for the acts and omissions of its subcontractors. Of course, it is possible to avoid such uncertainty through the contract – for example, by including a clause stating that the main contractor is liable for all acts and omissions of its subcontractors.

FIS members have access to free telephone legal advice from Bond Dickinson on a range of topics.

FIND OUT MORE

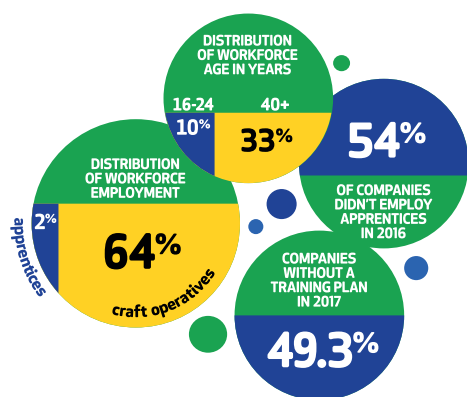
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FIS Skills – delivering Fit-Out Futures

Finance director of specialist contractor Tapper Interiors and member of the FIS Skills board **Helen Tapper** sets out what the new FIS initiative, aptly named Fit-Out Futures, has planned for skills development within the finishes and interiors sector.

FIS | Skills



Whether you like it or not, or even care, for that matter, there is a crisis on the horizon. Yes, you've heard it before, but there is no doubt we are heading for a major skills shortage in our industry. That's why I am proud to be part of the FIS Skills board, overseeing the delivery of Fit-Out Futures. So, what's it all about?

It is no secret that skills shortages, caused by lack of new entrants, an ageing skilled population and lack of training and education, are having a major impact on construction now. And things are set to get worse due to the reliance on European and migrant labour and impending Brexit.

Sadly, however, as the results of our recent research show (see infographic), the development of home-grown skills in our sector is, for many, at the bottom of the list, or not even there at all. "It's not my problem!" I can hear you cry. Why should I train? It's expensive, time consuming and then they only go and work for someone else. All of it may be true, but if we don't do something, we are all in trouble!

That's why FIS has developed Fit-Out Futures, an exciting new programme that aims to address the challenges associated with and take responsibility for developing the right solutions to our skills shortage.

So much has been written about the problems in the sector, especially since the Chancellor

delivered his budget in March, but not enough said about the solutions being implemented to tackle these problems head on.

Fit-Out Futures' key purpose is to develop future careers paths for all operating in the sector and ensure the sector's sustainability through a comprehensive programme that provides engagement with employers and coordination on all skills initiatives that are both relevant to and add value to the workforce and your business.

Over the next 12 months, our FIS Skills team will focus on developing initiatives that will help drive a cultural change in our sector. This will include programmes such as BuildBack and Building Heroes – taking people looking for work and giving them basic training in our sector skills so they are good to go when they come to site – and upskilling of the existing unqualified workforce to a minimum of NVQ2 by 2020. Also important is raising awareness about our sector with the younger generation, showing them they can have a career, not just a job. And, crucially, we want to make the process of upskilling and training as simple as possible – supporting you in the identification of quality training and where to find the funding to support that training.

To help fund our ambitions, FIS submitted a large bid to CITB in March, which I am delighted to say has passed the first stage of the CITB process. Prior to the bid being submitted, our FIS Skills team engaged with 161 members and dozens of industry partners to gather evidence and get the delivery plan secured. This included carrying out a Training Needs Analysis of the FIS membership which provided unparalleled insights, leadership and direction to inform the needs of the sector.

The bid is also backed by the research in the Stockerl Report, which reinforces three labour time bombs: the impact of Brexit, the detrimental impact of a high proportion of labour-only subcontracting (LOSC) workforce on training and the age profile of the workforce.

By aggregation of project initiatives within the industry and ensuring these are turned into a cohesive relevant solution for the sector, this programme will join the dots, build on best practice, develop and manage a holistic solution and prevent further fragmentation of training.

We want to develop a model of engagement for existing and new entrant workers that will become sustainable and be focused on careers and opportunities, not short-term training that is not aligned to jobs.

But, of course, we can't achieve all this without your buy-in. This is a problem that isn't going to go away. To find out more, email skills@thefis.org

FIND OUT MORE
www.thefis.org/skills-hub

Fit-Out Futures key projects

BuildBack is aimed at the unemployed. This is currently running in Newcastle in collaboration with the Jobcentre Plus and Tyne Metropolitan college.

Building Heroes is aimed at ex-military and veterans (in partnership).

BounceBack is about working with ex-offenders (in partnership).

NexGen FIS is aimed at Generation X.

Women in Fit-Out Special Interest Forum. Email: womeninfitout@thefis.org if you would like to help shape this.

FIS Inclusive Workforce targets diverse and hard-to-reach groups.

An education programme to raise awareness with schools and colleges about fit-out/construction as a career choice.

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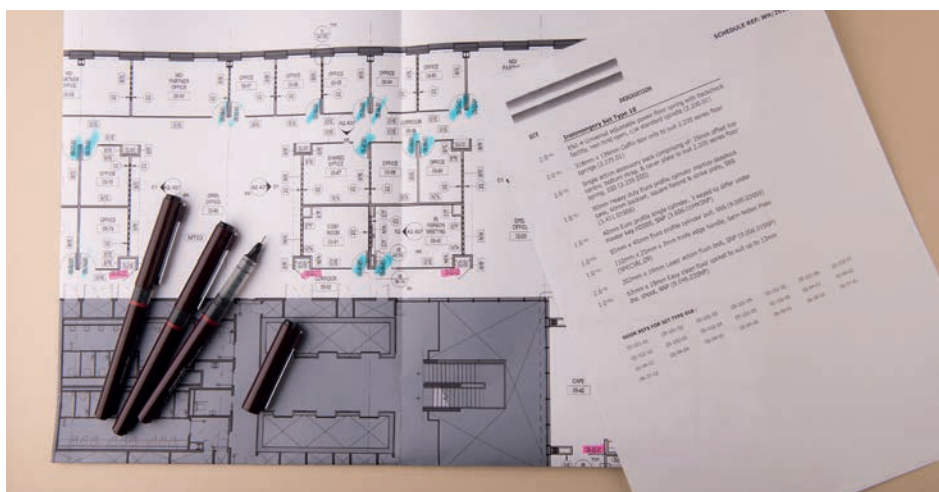


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Ironmongery in three words: detail, detail, detail

When it takes three years of training to be able to professionally write an ironmongery schedule, you know you're dealing with a sector with detail at its core. FIS technical manager **Joe Cilia** talks to industry experts to highlight the key aspects to consider in an ironmongery specification.



"Don't value engineer the hinges," commented Wayne Harris, managing director at architectural ironmongery supplier Harbrine. "People think they are saving money, but this is often a false economy and you frequently see grease dribbling out of hinges that are simply not fit for purpose."

"The hinges fail and the door drops and becomes damaged. It's a costly mistake, especially in high-traffic areas such as schools," explained Mr Harris, adding, "Typically, ironmongery will account for 1 per cent or less of a building's cost, so any savings are likely to be minimal."

Franz Lorenschitz, marketing manager at Allgood, which supplies architectural ironmongery and doorsets, said: "We see it on a regular basis where a contractor looks to change the specification due to cost and then runs into additional costs because the so-called cheaper alternative didn't allow for something important."

Writing an ironmongery schedule is a learned profession. "It's one that takes three years," said Douglas Masterton, technical manager at the Guild of Architectural Ironmongers (GAI), which runs and administers the GAI Diploma.

Paul Smith Dip GAI, UK sales director at Allgood, said: "People who achieve the Dip GAI are trained to ensure the correct ironmongery is specified, taking into account the performance of the door and its size. When it comes to ironmongery

specification, a well-planned and executed process saves time, cost and resources."

Michael Skelding from the Door and Hardware Federation (DHF) said that one of the biggest issues he sees concerns the correct specification, installation and then maintenance for door closers. "Generally, people are not aware that there are different strength closers and some can even be adjusted and provide a soft close to stop

doors banging shut," Mr Skelding said.

Mr Harris of Harbrine added: "There is also the issue of automatic entrance systems – sometimes referred to as 'wiremongery'. It's where ironmongery needs the services of an electrician to make it all work."

This was echoed by Mr Masterton, who said he had seen issues where Approved Document Q: Security in dwellings, needed to be met and people were not fully up to speed on what was needed to meet the requirement. "This is another good reason to use a trained person to write the specification," commented Mr Masterton. "For example, automatic doors need to have finger-trap protection to meet EN 16005, yet they may fall foul by not including it in the package."

New technical advances and the rise of high-density residential developments has seen an increased use of pocket doors. These are doors that slide and therefore save space usually taken up by the swing arc by using a void in the solid, or even glass, partition to hide the open door.

"These pocket doors are being used in a lot of schemes," said Jonathan Woodcock, an industry specification adviser working with ROB, a door systems designer and manufacturer. "We are working with architects to ensure some of the tall and heavier doors can be installed with an integrated frame that will carry the door without distorting the single skin of plasterboard on either face, and working out how the tracks can be maintained without having to open up the walls."

So, before you look to shave a bit from the cost by value engineering the hinges or think ironmongery schedules are easy to do without training, think again – it could cost you more than you might ever save. As ever, talk to the experts, every time.

FIND OUT MORE

JOE CILIA

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What are the benefits of health and wellbeing in construction?

In the macho world of construction, discussions about 'wellbeing' can seem out of place. After all, isn't it true that seasoned construction workers should be able to deal with health issues, bravely soldiering on regardless until payday? Maybe not...

The real truth is that health is important for all employees, regardless of which industry they work in. Which is why construction companies need to take a more proactive lead in managing the wellbeing of their workers.

Consider the numbers

Statistics from the HSE confirm that construction is a particularly dangerous industry for employees. Although just 5 per cent of the total UK workforce are in construction, these workers account for 27 per cent of all workplace fatalities, and 10 per cent of reported major injuries. They are also 100 x more likely to die from a disease – such as silicosis or asbestosis – as a result of their job.

The health impact of working in construction is long term – 54 per cent of male construction workers do not reach a working age of 60 in the industry, and 56 per cent of all male cancers are caused by working in construction.

Employers are making improvements, but employees are still falling ill and dying from avoidable factors.

Health from an employer's viewpoint

The cost in terms of human life is shocking, but from a financial standpoint, some employers may be tempted to keep health spend as

low as possible. From the short-term view of the balance sheet, it makes sense to restrict expenditure to the bare essentials, but this could be storing up problems for the future.

Sickness and absenteeism

Whenever a worker is injured, or contracts a serious illness, they will need to take time off to recover. Obviously, this presents a series of problems: productivity will drop while your employee recovers; if the worker needs to be replaced, you will incur extra hiring and salary costs for a contractor; and your worker may be entitled to sick pay and compensation where your business is found to be at fault.

Losing employees for any reason adds to the cost of a project. If margins are already stretched, can you afford to absorb those additional expenses?

Presenteeism

Almost as costly as having employees taking time off is the scourge of presenteeism.

Presenteeism is a British cultural phenomenon whereby being seen at work is considered as important as actually doing work. A truly healthy construction force will be encouraged to take time off after injury to recover – even if it does add to project costs.

Your workers may think they are doing you a favour by turning

up to work when not in the best of health, but they are not. Sick or injured workers are less productive – and risk worsening their condition in the process. In many cases, taking time off to recover may be less damaging to productivity than having them 'soldier on' at reduced capacity.

Start thinking long term

Instead of worrying about workers being off sick, employers should instead be planning to reduce instances of sickness and injury. In most cases, this means strengthening existing health and safety risk assessments to prevent injury or exposure to factors likely to cause illness.

Many employers are also beginning to consider employee wellbeing – health factors that are not directly related to work itself. Wellbeing provisions are not a legal requirement, but they can significantly improve the overall health – and performance – of employees.

What are these wellbeing factors?

Employees affected by substance abuse are just one example of a condition where employers can help, even if it is not directly related to the job. An alcoholic bricklayer is unlikely to perform well at work – and could present a significant risk to themselves and their colleagues, for instance.

Similarly, employees affected by mental health issues will also struggle to cope at work. One report suggests that construction workers are six times more likely to die from suicide than fall from height, indicating just how common depression and related conditions are in the workplace.

Although not required, construction firms should consider putting measures in place to help workers deal with non-work related conditions. By improving their overall health, these employees will be more productive – providing a reasonable return on investment.

Wellbeing programmes are also very attractive to would-be employees. Any construction firm that demonstrates it is committed to caring for its employees will find it much easier to attract the very best talent. And this boosts productivity and profitability in the long run.

Obviously, there are financial implications associated with wellbeing programmes, but the returns may be the justification you need to make the additional investment. For more help and advice, please get in touch.

FIND OUT MORE

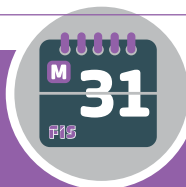
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Calendar of events



FIS Awards Lunch 2017

The Dorchester Hotel, London
6 June 2017

FIS Scottish Awards 2017

George Hotel, Edinburgh
6 October 2017

Members' Meetings 2017 Birmingham

Thursday 15 June (2–6pm)
Park Regis

Manchester

Wednesday 13 September
(2–6pm)
AC Hotel Marriott

Welcome to new FIS members

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Baumit establishes site in Kent

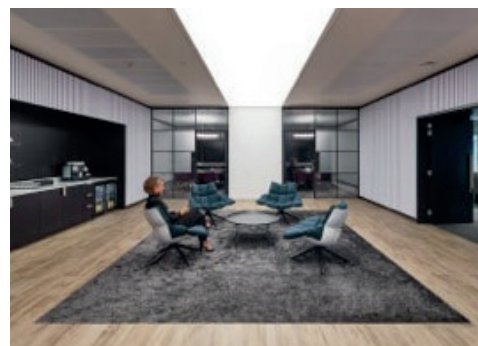
Building brand Baumit has established a full-service offering in Aylesford, Kent, resulting in the ready availability of its extensive range of innovative External Wall Insulation (EWI) systems.

The new site is Baumit's UK centre of excellence. As well as offering technical and sales support, the operation includes a 15,000 sq. ft warehouse where every shade within Baumit's 888-colour programme is available to add to its entire range of mineral and synthetic topcoats.

Baumit's managing director, Ben Warren, said: "Our Aylesford site means we are able to deliver a more service-orientated operation. It has enabled us to 'break down the bulk', meaning we can cater for any order of any size – customers no longer need to buy in bulk."

FIND OUT MORE

www.baumit.com



BW completes City law firm fit-out

BW has completed the fit-out for commercial lawyers Herbert Smith Freehills at its London headquarters. The 14-week project was valued at £2.1 million.

Working alongside architects TP Bennett, the objective of the scheme was to transform existing meeting room space, toilets, vending areas and office space into a stunning contemporary meeting room suite, boardroom and private meeting rooms.

The building works involved the strip out of five separate areas and the fully occupied first floor main reception and meeting room suite. This was a challenging logistical project as the client remained in the building while the project was carried out with BW working alongside the client's operational and client-facing areas, and other back of house space, to create an amazing space within highly sensitive, occupied areas.

FIND OUT MORE

www.wearebw.com



Twenty years of NFU Mutual fit-outs for Planned Office Interiors

Planned Office Interiors has carried out a complete refurbishment of NFU Mutual's flagship agency based in Welshpool. The project is the latest for NFU Mutual, following 20 years of delivering design solutions to their agencies nationwide.

During the 12-week fit-out, 290m² of ground floor space was transformed from bare brick to a working office, with a brief to create a conference room, three private offices and a large kitchen

area with storage space.

The open-plan reception and office area also incorporates a giant bespoke feature wall following a photography competition run by NFU Mutual, who decided upon an iconic image of Powis Castle as the winner.

FIND OUT MORE

www.plannedofficeinteriors.co.uk

MX Display maps out London at City Hall

MX Display has designed, printed and installed a large-format floor graphic at City Hall, in London, as part of an event focused on fighting air pollution in the City.

City Hall contacted MX Display to request a huge Photo Floor graphic for its event, which was attended by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. The client wanted to bring the campaign to life using a map to demonstrate pollution levels across London.

MX Display's creative team provided advice on how to use the design and material to best effect, and the resulting Photo Floor map proved a real hit with the school children present, who were able to interact with it and explore the pollution levels related to different areas.

Kate Findlay, from City Hall, was delighted with the flooring and went on to say: "The event went well and everyone was very impressed with the map – including the Mayor – so a huge thank you for your hard work getting it measured, printed and installed in such a short timeframe."

FIND OUT MORE
www.mxdisplay.co.uk



Scotwood Interiors has fitted out various meeting rooms for long-standing client Royal London Group at its Edinburgh head office.

The 14-week project involved stripping out the existing air conditioning, partitions and flooring and the creation of 10 new meeting spaces with folding screens to increase flexibility. Walnut panels, timber veneered ceilings and glass walls have helped to create a sophisticated environment, while designer curtains and wallpaper, digital prints and bright soft furnishings add a modern element.

This project follows the fit-out of four other floors as part of a year-long project to refurbish the client's head office.

FIND OUT MORE
www.scotwood.com

Saracen's portfolio boosted with new names

Workplace consultant Saracen Interiors has announced a run of contract wins. All wins are first-time clients for Saracen, with big brand names including Samsung, Call Credit and Giraffe Restaurants featuring in the mix.

The company will complete a fast-track office fit-out for Samsung in Brentford, while undertaking sizeable fit-out projects for both Call Credit and owners of Giraffe, Boparan, in London.

Saracen also announced in March that it had started on-site for fertiliser development company Sirius Minerals Plc at the iconic former Scarborough Building Society building. And in April, Saracen confirmed it had completed the refurbishment of a luxury, five-bedroom, £2 million property in Guildford, Surrey – its first venture into the high-end residential market.

FIND OUT MORE
www.saraceninteriors.com

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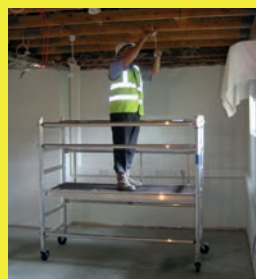


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