



TOP-LEVEL CONTRACTS

This year's Contractors Awards winners revealed
Technical: building regulations under scrutiny
one year on from the Grenfell Tower fire
Regional focus: increased activity in Birmingham
Skills: is the apprenticeship levy having an impact?

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In this issue



4 Community News

Latest updates from around the sector

6 Contracts and products

Projects completed and new products launched during recent months

8 Skills: apprenticeship levy

One year on from its introduction, we ask if the new system is making a difference

12 Regional focus: Birmingham

Why has there been so much fit-out activity in the UK's second city and who's been doing it?

18 Technical: regulations

Last June's Grenfell Tower fire prompted an outcry for change – so what's happened since?

21 Contractors Awards 2018

Details of the winners at this year's ceremony

Front cover: Brian Hendry Interiors' award-winning ceilings project at Hawkhead Care Home (page 26)

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Printer: Pureprint Editorial production: Wheal Associates Ltd

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WELCOME

One year after the tragic fire at Grenfell we are starting to see the future landscape of how we design, build and operate buildings. We are going to hear a lot about competence, compliance and evidence. We will also be talking about the 'golden thread' and how this will mean project completion and handover are no longer synonymous. When responsibility for design and delivery is clear, we can expect differing attitudes to cost-cutting disguised as value engineering. The days of promising one thing and delivering something cheaper and inferior should end. Good companies have nothing to fear – this will level the playing field and reward those that invest in competence. And it will benefit those that can demonstrate compliance through evidence.

Our philosophy at FIS is to solve our own problems rather than wait for others to do it for us. So it's been no surprise that FIS members have embraced a project to enable them to demonstrate that they use the right Product, Process and People. PPP is designed by contractors for contractors to satisfy the needs of main contractors and clients. It brings together all parties in a process that can be used with existing project management tools without adding costs.

To prevent further tragedies, it is incumbent on us to embrace the change in culture Dame Judith Hackitt calls for.

One clear indicator of change will be a big rise in the number of apprentices in the sector. Yet in the year since the apprentice levy was introduced, the number of apprentices has fallen. This must be reversed. The triple timebomb of Brexit on migrant workers; an ageing workforce; and fragmented, self-employed teams will be compounded by the new driver for evidence of competence. How we respond will define the future of the sector.

But with challenge comes massive opportunities, and in this edition we focus on Birmingham – a city seeing unprecedented growth and projects that will no doubt win future FIS Awards.

The Awards this June will be my final event as chief executive. I'm moving on as FIS moves up. But I've had a great seven years at FIS and will watch with interest how the sector progresses.

David Frise, FIS chief executive

FIS: Hackitt report reinforces association's PPP message

FIS technical director Joe Cilia gives the association's response to Dame Judith Hackitt's final report

Commissioned after the fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2016, Dame Judith Hackitt's *Building a safer future: independent review of building regulations and fire safety* was released on 17 May.

The interim report in November highlighted a lack of competency across the industry, with no trail of evidence to prove the compliance of products being installed. She also said product labelling was in some cases lacking and misleading.

The final report calls for an outcomes-based rather than a prescriptive solution. There was an outcry when it was first published because combustible materials, as used in the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower, were not banned outright for use as cladding.

The report lists a total of 53 recommendations in 10 sections, including: design, construction and refurbishment; competence;

products; and a 'golden thread of building information'. The latter, I believe, will have the greatest impact on our sector.

On the first point, the report says responsibility for building safety is often passed down to subcontract level, where value engineering changes often go undocumented.

On the second, it says the competence of everyone involved in the design, procurement, delivery and maintenance of a building is key – though it will be challenging to define levels of competency for every discipline involved.

The recommendation for 'clear, permanent and transparent labelling of products' should address misleading wording such as 'fire proof' or 'fire resistant', and clearly explain the parameters by which a product can be used.



Finally, the 'golden thread' of information is central to providing evidence of compliance. It offers building owners and operators clear information on the asset, how to maintain it and how to make safe changes. Like the processes described in PAS 1192 parts 2 and 3, it will use easy-to-search digital files and data.

Meeting the recommendations will require a change in culture,

where good enough is not good enough any more. In her interim report, Dame Judith asked the industry 'not to wait but look to address these issues themselves'.

To this end, FIS has developed its Product Process People (PPP) initiative to provide a low-cost process that can be administered on any software.

PPP works by capturing evidence at every stage of a project, from specification and testing, that proposed products meet requirements. Any changes are logged and the order placed and recorded. Once on site, a copy of the delivery note and progress images will show that the products are correctly installed.

Images of operatives' CSCS cards will also be recorded, plus evidence of all relevant training.

Once completed, this record can be shared, along with the product data and maintenance schedules.

• For details or to take part in PPP, email joecilia@thefis.org

London redevelopment highlighted at Saint-Gobain International Trophy

The redevelopment of the Star and Garter building in Richmond, Surrey, has been recognised at the 11th Saint-Gobain International Trophy, which took place in Lisbon, Portugal in March.

The luxury development, incorporating products and systems from British Gypsum, was runner-up in the Residential category of the awards, in which

87 projects competed for 14 prizes. FIS's departing chief executive David Frise was among the judges.

Created in 1998 to showcase the best in drylining, the Saint-Gobain International Trophy provides a platform for contractors from across the globe to present their most innovative projects.

The Star and Garter project was praised for the skill demonstrated by subcontractor, PM White Drylining, throughout the renovation.



Originally built in 1924 as a home for injured servicemen, the grade II-listed building has been transformed into a series of opulent residences.

Developer London Square worked with the heritage department at Richmond Council to restore the building.

The biennial trophy will next return in spring 2020. For more on this year's competition, visit www.saint-gobain-gyproc.com/trophies/

Shaw group acquires STS

Flooring specialist Shaw Industries Group has acquired Scotland-based carpet tile manufacturer Sanquhar Tile Services (STS).

Shaw Industries offers a portfolio of carpet, hardwood, laminate, resilient, tile and stone flooring products, synthetic turf and other specialist items. Based in the US, it is a wholly owned subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway and has operations in the US, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, India, Mexico, Singapore, United Arab Emirates and the UK.

STS was founded in 1971 by the Sidlaw Group and manufactures carpet tiles in the UK and Europe. www.shawcontract.com

FIS

#iBuilt This2018

Get ready for #iBuiltThis2018

FIS is following up last year's highly successful #iBuiltThis2017 competition – set up to change perceptions of the sector and encourage greater participation – by running the competition again this summer.

The social media-based competition gives people of all ages a chance to show off their building skills.

The format will stay the same this year, with submission categories divided into three age groups – 13 and under; 14 to 18; and 19 and over. Participants will be asked to take a selfie of themselves with their building.

The winners of last year's competition were announced by TV presenter George Clarke at UK Construction Week (UKCW) last October (see *FIS Focus*, November 2017). They were:

- **13 and under:** Kendrick Long – 'New three little pigs', a mix of gardening materials, chopsticks and Lego bricks. He won a family package to Legoland
- **14-18:** Emily Ash, representing Brooklands College, Surrey – wall and cavity synoptic testing. She won an iPhone 8
- **19 and over:** Carwyn Jones – Dragon's Eye cabin. He won an overnight stay at



#iBuiltThis 2017 under-13s winner Kendrick Long

the London St Pancras hotel, as well as a trip on the London Eye

• **Judges' award for excellence:** Frankie Bicker – Lime and fibrous plastering restoration at the Royal Academy of Arts. He won a GoPro camera.

FIS expects this year's competition to be even bigger and better, with a line-up of high-profile judges and a range of top-level prizes.

The association will continue its partnership with UK Construction Week and plans to hold the awards presentations at the trade show on 9-11 October 2018 at the NEC in Birmingham.

• *For more information on the competition, email skills@thefis.org*

Interceil declared champions at Armstrong #GridOff contest

Interceil took top honours at this year's #GridOff competition, held for the second year by Armstrong Ceiling Solutions for its Omega contractors.

The Interceil team of Graham Bullock and Steve Curry beat fellow finalists, and last year's winners, Coyle Suspended Ceilings by two seconds in the final at the NEC in March.

This year's competition attracted more than 10 teams from the Omega network. They competed in pairs to install a Prelude 24mm grid and Ultima+ board edge tile system to create a 600 x 600 module grid in a space of 7.2m² with a floor-to-ceiling height of 2m.



The winning Interceil team: Graham Bullock (left) and Steve Curry

PEOPLE MOVES



• Saracen Interiors has recruited project consultant Perry Scofield to develop business in the London commercial property market. Responsible for early client liaison and relationship development, Perry will support projects in the initial concept and planning stages. He joins the firm from Woodalls Design, where he has worked for four years in a business development role. www.saraceninteriors.com



• Workplace management specialist Donseed has recruited Dave Ingram, former managed service director for Maintel, as its chief operating officer. Dave brings over 25 years' experience in communications and IT. He will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the business, based in Donseed HQ's in Birmingham. www.donseed.com



• Fit-out specialist Aztec has recruited Tony Pyper as senior contracts manager. He will work closely with senior managers, taking large-scale projects from prospect stage through to practical completion. An electrical engineer, he also benefits from a practical and technical engineering approach. www.aztec-interiors.co.uk



• SIG Performance Technology, provider of acoustic, fire and thermal solutions, has appointed Mark Fyfe as business development director. He will liaise with internal and external sales teams to bolster service and build the product range. Mark has been working as SIG's UK infrastructure director for the past five years. www.sigpt.co.uk



• Rockfon has added to its team in Ireland with the appointment of Gerard Clarke as specification sales manager. He brings extensive experience in sales and marketing, having worked with specifiers and contractors in the construction industry for 20 years, and joins from Eurobond Laminates. www.rockfon.co.uk



• Ted Baker has been named as the new national sales manager for aask, a manufacturer of profiles and trims for ceilings and partitions. He has worked for both manufacturers and distributors, most recently with CCF. www.aask.us

CONTRACTS

Armstrong helps Scouts 'be prepared'

Ceilings from Armstrong have been used to create a new bunkhouse for Derbyshire Scouts – part of Armstrong's New Beginnings initiative to support community projects (see boxout).

Architect Maber's brief was to replace a former Rolls Royce canteen with a single-storey bunkhouse at the 47-acre Drum Hill Scout camp site. It comprises a training/dining hall, kitchen and bunk rooms with associated services for up to 44 residents.

Constructed of SIP timber frame on a ground-bearing slab with external brick plinth, it features larch timber cladding and a profiled aluminium roof deck.

Armstrong's 100% recyclable Dune eVo Tegular tiles were installed on a Prelude 24mm grid with TLS cross-tees in the entrance, main hall and the

corridors of the 368m² bunkhouse, while 56m² of Hydroboard Tegular tiles with non-corrosive grid were used in the kitchen, shower rooms and toilets.

Future-proofing was key to the brief, to allow the building to develop with technology and its users. The building fabric was super-insulated, and green features installed, including grey water systems and photovoltaics on the roof.

Lee Smith, associate director at architect Maber and a Scout leader, said: "From concrete slab to fully clad building in two weeks shows the benefit of off-site modular construction."

The bunkhouse was also the result of five years' fundraising and donated products and services from Armstrong, Maber and other contractors. www.armstrongceilings.com



Scouts Felix Hughes and Libby Halford help out

In the wake of the Derbyshire Scouts project, Armstrong has launched a competition via social media to give another community body the chance to win a new ceiling. Open to the end of June to any non-commercial project in the UK and Ireland that serves the community, the winner gets 250m² of Dune eVo tiles and grid plus up to three days of installation time. Visit www.new-beginnings.com

Ridon adds to Stonehenge

Ridon Joinery has completed a fit-out in the new coach park facilities at Stonehenge for English Heritage, installing a new reception counter and storage area. Ridon replaced a solid chestnut counter and storage wall with a Xylo Cleaf product in weathered timber, with the counter top and high-level area in Corian designer white. All products were built and installed in five weeks, ready for the summer. www.ridonjoinery.co.uk



It's a wrap at Basingstoke shopping centre

Wrapping films from Architextural, part of the William Smith Group 1832, have helped inject new life into the customer lounge at Festival Place shopping centre, Basingstoke. Vinyl film has become increasingly popular with shopfitters as an alternative to natural finishes, and self-adhesive films can be applied on top of existing surfaces.

This project refurbished lockers, cupboards, a feature wall and reception desks, using Cover Styl' Oak and High Gloss White patterns. www.architextural.co.uk



Scotwood gets creative

Scotwood Interiors has completed the fit-out of a new Edinburgh HQ for creative hub the Leith Agency. The design, based on reclaimed materials synonymous with the local area's manufacturing history, drew on raw steel, marine grade rubber flooring and rusty mesh.

The project involved stripping out flooring and suspended ceilings to leave exposed services. New LED lighting and heating systems were installed, and meeting rooms themed on local historical pubs used glazed and solid partitions with laminate doors and bespoke features such as reclaimed scaffold board feature walls. www.scotwood.com



Style installs working walls in Adobe workspace

Partitioning specialist Style has designed and delivered a flexible 'working wall' solution within Adobe's new offices in London's Shoreditch, designed by Gensler.

It has helped create an open-plan space that includes meeting rooms, social hubs, a library, tech café and games area.

The cluster of individual sliding and pivoting wall panels can create numerous spaces for meetings or be pulled together to form a wider temporary wall.

Style also installed a Skyfold vertical-rising partitioning wall, capable of delivering 55dB acoustic privacy to divided areas, as well as a semi-automatic DORMA Moveo operable wall.

Each panel features a magnetic white board on one side and a fabric pinboard on the other. The pivoting system allows the panels to be swivelled around during breakout sessions, to share ideas with adjoining groups.

www.style-partitions.co.uk



IMAGE: RENZO MAZZOLINI BUREAU LEITH

PRODUCTS

Clockwise from right: Rockfon's Eclipse; William Smith window film; SAS 330i lighting profile; and flooring from Shaw Contract



GRIDS AND PANNELLING

Rockfon has introduced new grids, acoustic wall solutions and installation videos. Its Matt White 11 has been designed to diffuse light and minimise reflections commonly found with metal surfaces, helping to eliminate the contrast between ceiling tile and grid. The range is in 15mm and 24mm Chicago Metallic grids and matching W and L Profiles.

Two new fixing kits allow Eclipse acoustic frameless islands to be mounted vertically on the wall. The 15mm Direct and 65mm Stepped options allow panels to be mounted away from the wall.

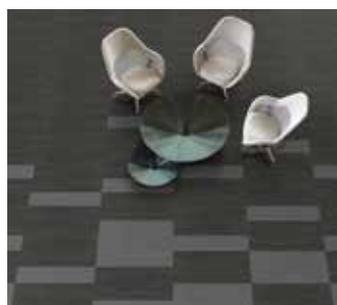
Finally, the firm has released four 3D installation videos to support its PDF System Descriptions – System Eclipse Island; System Eclipse Wall; System T24 X single-layer and System T24 X™ double-layer acoustic ceiling systems. www.rockfon.co.uk

FLOORING TILES

Shaw Contract has launched Rapid Select flooring – Cradle to Cradle-certified tiles with a quick-delivery option, available in two shapes and three styles:

- **Nook** – an off-set square design, with high and low textured pattern effects, available in eight colours, 50cm x 50cm
- **Roam** – an elongated plank tile with a natural texture, available in six colours, 25cm x 100cm.
- **Graph** – a network of lines that create a small-scale pattern, available in eight colours, 50cm x 50cm.

The tiles are available with Shaw's TaskWorx backing, which is suitable for heavy-use areas. They are manufactured in the UK using



Shaw's EcoSolution Q nylon fibre, which the firm claims is easy to clean and resilient. www.shawcontract.com/rapidselect

LIGHTING SYSTEMS

SAS International has been conducting research into the science and technology of light to make its lighting systems more efficient and safe.

Polar diagrams were used to generate light intensity, enabling clients to predict how the light would work in their office space. The impact of light quality on wellbeing was also considered.

SAS says it has manipulated the spectrum of colours emitted by a given light source to highlight certain colours, softening harsher tones and heightening duller ones. In terms of wellness, it researched the sensitivity of receptors in our eyes to particular colours.

The research has led to revisions of SAS's older lighting systems. For the SAS330, used in commercial buildings, SAS has developed the SAS330i, an integrated lighting profile available in linear and tartan grid forms.

This was recently installed in the refurbishment of 20 Canada Square in London's Canary Wharf, where the new LED version guaranteed to deliver more than



90% peak light output after 60,000 hours of operation.

The SAS740 aluminium ceiling system, meanwhile, now incorporates lighting using the same LED light sources as the SAS330i, offering an alternative to traditional suspended ceilings. www.sasintgroup.com

INSULATION WINDOW FILM

Window film supplier William Smith – part of the William Smith Group 1832 – has added three advanced 3M insulation window films to its portfolio:

- Thinsulate Window Film Climate Control 40 (CC40)
- All Seasons Amber 35
- All Seasons Silver 20.

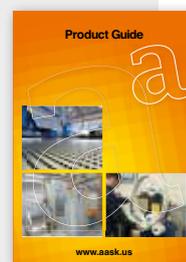
The firm claims the CC40, a solar control and insulating film, increases the insulation performance of windows during winter and includes heat rejection properties for summer. The film helps reduce the glare of the sun and protects against UV light.

Meanwhile, 3M's All Seasons Series adds a budget-friendly insulating option to the Thinsulate range. Both of these metallised solar control films – the All Seasons Silver 20 and All Seasons Amber 35 – offer a combination of solar control and insulating properties. www.williamsmith.co.uk

READING MATTER

UPDATED BROCHURE

Aask has updated its product guide to provide a comprehensive brochure in a convenient size for site and office. The product guide can be supplied in hard copy or PDF format. Contact [aask on 01869 322321](tel:01869322321) or sales@aask.us www.aask.us



CEILING CPD

A CPD presentation on the role of Cradle to Cradle design in the built environment has been approved by RIBA for Armstrong Ceiling Solutions.

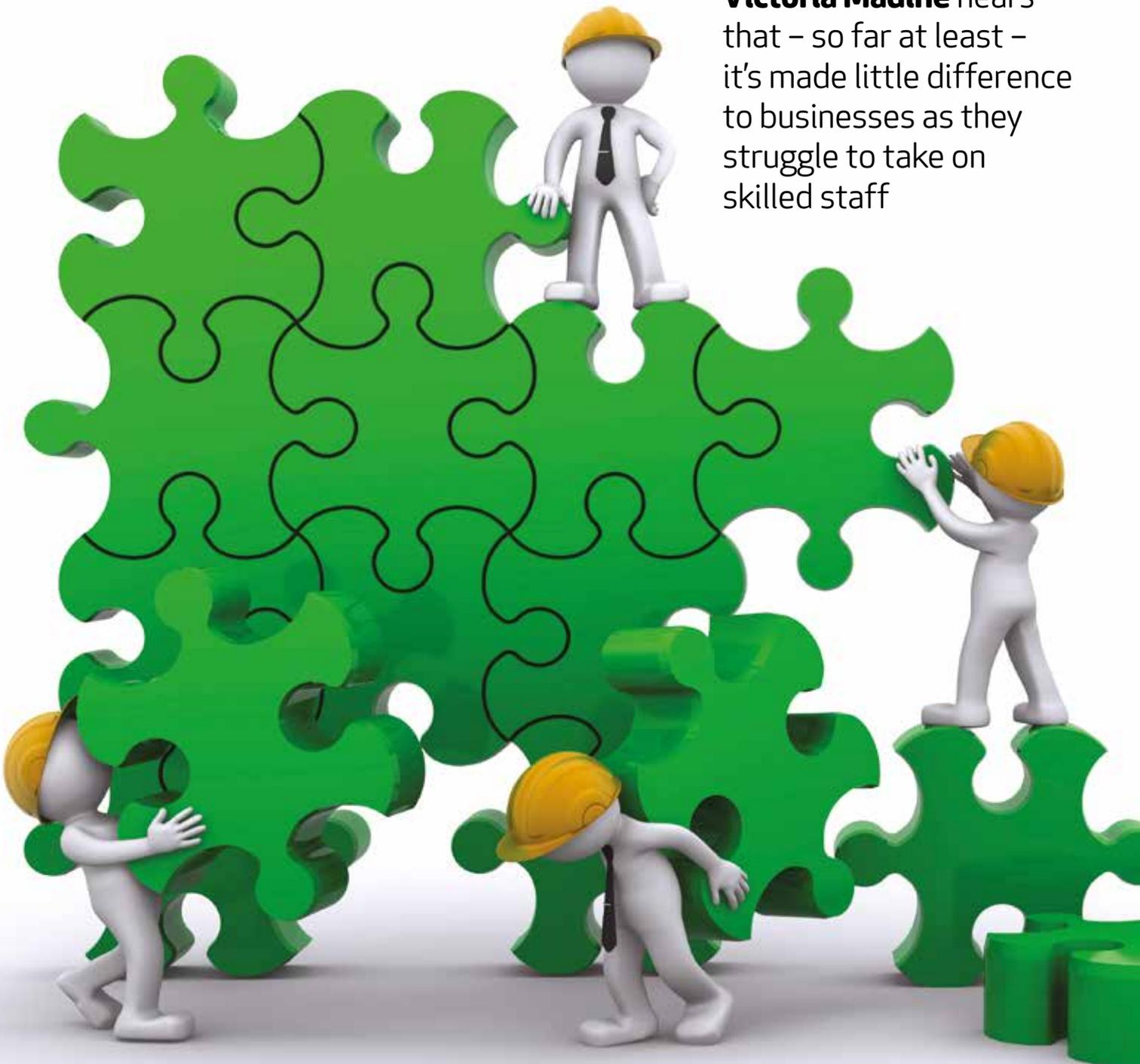
The presentation – *The circular economy and Cradle to Cradle design* – aims to help architects understand the business case for circular design principles and to evaluate the performance characteristics of ceiling systems designed in this way.

Guidance is also given on how design principles can be applied in practice. www.armstrongceilings.com/commercial/en-gb/



THE APPRENTICESHIP PUZZLE

One year on from the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, **Victoria Madine** hears that – so far at least – it's made little difference to businesses as they struggle to take on skilled staff



On 6 April 2017, the apprenticeship levy came into effect for all UK employers that have a wage bill of more than £3m a year. Set at 0.5% of the value of the pay bill, the idea was to create a central pot to fund three million new apprentices by 2020.

A simple concept on the face of it. But one year on, and the government's target is already looking like a pipe dream.

According to FIS's latest Training Needs Analysis (TNA), the number of employers employing apprentices dropped 5% from 46% in 2016 to 41% in 2017 (see box).

The fall in apprenticeship starts in the finishes and fit-out sector reflects a wider trend revealed in figures from the Department for Education (DfE). In 2016/17, it says, there were 419,300 apprenticeship starts in England – that's 18,100 fewer than the previous year.

"Many employers in the sector are simply finding the levy too complicated and lack the time and resources to work out how to access the funding 'pot'," says Amanda Scott, project manager – skills at FIS.

In theory, the levy process should be straightforward. Collected monthly by HMRC through the PAYE system and overseen by the DfE, the government pays a 10% top-up to the funds paid in by employers. This creates a dedicated pot for apprenticeship training and assessment.

Many construction sector employers also pay a CITB levy, which is a separate arrangement aimed at supporting skills and training needs more broadly.

All employers receive a £15,000 annual allowance, which effectively means employers with an annual pay bill of £3m or less need not pay a levy. Non-levy payers receive government

funding for 90% of apprenticeship training costs. In addition, companies with fewer than 50 employees have all training costs for 16- to 18-year-olds covered.

Levy payers can reclaim their contribution as digital vouchers to pay for apprenticeships through an approved training provider (listed on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers). Unspent funds expire in 24 months.

To add to the confusion, two types of apprenticeship scheme currently co-exist – frameworks and standards – although frameworks are being phased out, to be replaced by standards by 2020.

ON THE FRONTLINE

Paul Leach, operations director at Stortford Interiors, says that although the levy was introduced 12 months ago, his company is still figuring out how to benefit from the funding pot. "We can't see a route to access the funds created through the levy," he says. "It's as though the levy payments have disappeared down a black hole."

Like many interiors companies, Stortford has contractual obligations to employ apprentices, and Leach is keen on the idea of developing talent.

FIS is supporting the company to make use of the levy funding and Leach hopes to draw from it in the coming months.

But he remains unsure of the policy's details. "What happens to the funds that are unspent? What if we can't spend the funds in the timeframe by just a few weeks – could we get an extension?" Leach asks.

Helen Yeulet, skills delivery director at FIS, suggests that, as well as the lack of clarity, the levy is failing at a more fundamental level.

"The government's definition of

'apprenticeship' does not necessarily suit the needs of levy payers in the sector," she says.

Jon Riley, managing director at fibrous plaster specialist Locker & Riley, agrees, saying the levy is 'not fit for purpose'. Riley estimates it takes around seven years to train an artisan plasterer to the level of 'master craftsman', with much of that training taking place on the job, which is not recognised as formal apprenticeship training.

"We have 10 trainees at varying levels, each costing around £10,000 a year. That's £100,000 a year. We're putting around £30,000 a year into the levy pot – we can maybe eventually get £20,000 back," he says. "I appreciate that it's early days for the levy, but so far it has not served to incentivise me to do anything differently."

Part of the uncertainty surrounding the apprenticeship levy stems from the development of the new standards. At the time of going to press in May, only 40 of the 92

FIS TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS: KEY POINTS

FIS asked members to respond to its latest TNA survey in February this year, with 72 companies submitting responses.

- Just under 41% of respondents to FIS's latest TNA survey of members said they had employed apprentices in 2017 – that's 5% down on the figure of 46% in 2016. However, 47.2% of respondents said they would consider employing an apprentice in 2018.
- Just a fifth (20%) of TNA survey respondents are levy payers, with most respondents not liable to pay the levy (80%).
- Well over a third of respondents (37%) said apprenticeship training provision was generally difficult to access in their local area, with a little over half (54%) saying access was easy and 8.6% stating they had no access.
- Just over two thirds (67.2%) said they had accessed CITB grants for training in the past year, with over half (54.5%) requiring assistance to access the CITB skills and training funds. Only 20.5% were able to claim back 100% of their CITB training grant funding.
- Just under half (47.2%) of respondents said their ability to deliver projects was being affected by an unskilled workforce, while 78.6% said their business faced increasing labour demands in the coming year.





“We want to bring on the next generation, but we can only take on apprentices if we’re sure of work – not every year brings us this level of confidence”

standards submitted for the construction industry had thus far been approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA), the government quango created in April 2017 to develop apprenticeships and support employers.

Yet construction employers, from main contractors to SMEs, along with the CITB, have been working with the government since 2014 to develop the new apprenticeship standards.

The idea was that employers would band together to form a trailblazer group of at least 12 businesses. Each trailblazer group would develop one occupational standard, ensuring each trade had one definitive apprenticeship. The standard for interior systems is one of those still under development.

According to Yeulet, the IfA is allowing current frameworks to be used while the trailblazers are being developed – although this does not apply if a firm is passing a voucher for use in the supply chain where it has to be a trailblazer.

Another confusing element to the levy is that the rules are liable to change. For example, as of April this year, employers have been able to transfer up to 10% of the levy funds in their digital account to one other employer, which must also hold a digital account, allowing employers to better support their supply chain.

Some businesses are pushing for this policy to be further reviewed to reflect the long, complex supply chains associated with construction.

As Chloe Warner, learning and development adviser at Saint-Gobain, explains: “If we were given more control over how to use our levy fund, it would enable us to make better use of our pot and support businesses within our

supply chain to bring key skills to the industry.”

So how are registered training providers faring? Has the levy effected demand from employers for their services?

Alyn Carr, deputy head of construction at TyneMet College, says most employers that the college works with are non-levy paying SMEs. “These small companies make up the backbone of construction,” he says. “We need incentives for this group to take on apprentices if numbers are to increase. Overall, levy payers are large companies that already have resources in place for training.”

BEDDING IN TIME

The DfE did not respond to *FIS Focus*’ request for a comment about the fall in apprenticeship starts. However, a parliamentary briefing paper released in January 2018 (no. 06113) states: ‘It is premature to draw definitive conclusions regarding the potential reasons for any fall in starts.’

Others agree that it is too early to draw conclusions about the efficacy of the levy, and that more time is needed for businesses to get to grips with its processes.

Helen Tapper, finance director at Tapper Interiors and an FIS board member, is helping to develop the standard for interiors systems. She says: “We need another two years before we can see the results of the levy.”

While the jury is still out about how effective the levy may prove to be, there is broad consensus that it is forcing companies to think about how to develop new and existing talent.

Chloe Warner of Saint-Gobain says the group sees the levy as a positive opportunity to put further resources into developing employees within the business, especially those who might

not otherwise have the chance to start on an apprenticeship programme.

For Steve Coley, managing director of Lakeside Ceilings and Partitions, the levy is a “step in the right direction”.

The company is a non-levy payer but it currently has six apprentices and four trainees on its books. Coley says he would be encouraged to increase the number of apprentices if SMEs were given more upfront help with the costs of providing them.

“We want to bring on the next generation, but we can only take on apprentices if we’re sure of work,” he says. “This year the going has been good and we’ve been able to invest in training, but not every year brings us this level of confidence.”

The apprenticeship levy is still very much a work in progress – which is a big part of the problem. But there is a sense of optimism that, as the standards are confirmed, it will become easier to use the funding to address employers’ apprenticeship needs. FIS’s TNA found that just over 47% of respondents would consider employing an apprentice in 2018.

Everyone is clear about one thing: the ongoing need to tackle the skills crisis in interiors and the broader construction industry. As a stark illustration of this, FIS’s TNA found that almost half (47.2%) of companies believe their ability to deliver projects is affected by a lack of skilled workers.

As Alyn Carr of TyneMet College says: “There is still a massive need to challenge young people’s mindset about construction and encourage new entrants. Encouraging people to consider engineering has been pushed with some good results. Now the government must focus on construction.”

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SPOTLIGHT ON BIRMINGHAM

Activity and innovation are two words increasingly used to describe the construction and fit-out market in Birmingham. **Dean Gurden** finds out why

Birmingham has plenty to look forward to in the next decade. In 2022, it will be hosting the Commonwealth Games, and then four years later there's a rather important train arriving in the city. The 'HS2 effect' can already be seen in rising property prices, a city centre skyline covered with cranes constructing top-of-the-range office space, apartments and new retail projects, and a general sense of optimism.

The latest data from the Deloitte Birmingham Crane Survey (January 2018)

shows continued strong development activity in the city's office market, with well over 1m ft² (93,000m²) of office construction for the second consecutive year and a further 1.2m ft² of new office floorspace to come to market in the next two years. The survey also shows a surge in residential market activity, with more than 4,000 units under construction.

"Birmingham is experiencing unprecedented levels of investment at present," says Andrew Fuller, city design manager with Birmingham City Council. "Much of this is in reaction to the huge aspirations the city is expected to deliver in response to its ongoing growth agenda. And yes, the anticipated arrival of HS2 is already responsible for the relocation of major global companies, such as HSBC, to the city."

Fuller believes the new improved connectivity to the capital makes Birmingham as commutable into London as most of the Home Counties.

"The impact on not only the environs around the station terminus itself – known as Curzon Street – but across the whole city is phenomenal," he says. "The historic commercial

heart of the city has seen significant investment from existing and new occupiers, with pressure to deliver major proposals such as 3 Snowhill."

This final element of the Snowhill Estate will be the largest city centre office development outside of London when it completes in 2019.

All this investment couldn't come too soon, according to Andrew Parkin, partner and global head of acoustics at multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy Cundall.

"Birmingham has been largely neglected by funders for quite a long time," he says. "But we're seeing a lot more confidence in the market, with more external and overseas funding aiding development. And in supporting new builds, existing buildings are having to play catch-up, which is prompting the fit-out market to be active as well"

Parkin is confident that demand is most definitely outstripping supply at present. "While a lot of corporate offices are being built, they are not ready yet and people still need space in the short term," he says.

He acknowledges that HS2 is the real



Cundall's
Andrew
Parkin



The Snowhill Estate promises to be the largest city centre office development outside London



game-changer for the city. "It's taking up lots of space, but all the supply chain that comes with it is arranging itself here as well."

"There are a lot of people moving into the area from outside that all need places. And there isn't the new-build stock for that yet, so the refit market is pretty active."

As well as handling the M&E design for HS2's move into Snowhill, Cundall has added to all the recent activity by expanding its own fourth-floor premises at 15 Colmore Row into the floor above to accommodate its growing team.

The firm relocated its Birmingham office to

its current site in 2014 (see images and boxout overleaf). As Parkin explains: "Like elsewhere in the country, there's a big shift towards more human-centric fit-outs, with health and wellbeing being a very large agenda item. And that's what we've focused on with our own premises."

Central to its design are the concepts of biophilia, which essentially involves bringing nature into the office, and biomimicry, whereby design elements mimic nature.

Parkin points to the new feature staircase, which loosely resembles a spine. "Collaboration



Steve Coley, centre, with trainees at Snowhill

LAKESIDE STEPS UP

"Historically, all we've ever had in the Midlands are education projects," says Steve Coley, managing director at Lakeside Ceilings and Partitions. "We've been kept busy with academies, schools, college refurbishments and lots of student accommodation. That's been our bread and butter here in the Midlands for years."

"But there are an awful lot of companies using HS2 and the link-up with London as an excuse to relocate and pay lower rates."

Lakeside is currently engaged on a couple of projects in Birmingham centre, one of which is 3 Snowhill for BAM Construction. The massive project is a step up for Lakeside.

"In moving from educational projects to commercial office fit-outs, this is a higher-spec Category A job," says Coley.

Unlike the firm's educational work, which tends to involve partitioning classrooms and suspended ceiling work, the Snowhill project calls for high-spec metal suspended ceilings. "From a contractor's perspective, you'd much rather be earning 12-15% of a high-spec job than something more run-of-the mill," explains Coley. "There's pretty much the same amount of work that goes into a £100,000 school job as a £200,000 office fit-out, but double the profit."

Lakeside's other main project in the city is The Lansdowne for contractor Interserve. The building is the second highest apartment block in Birmingham and, as with Snowhill, Coley acknowledges the challenges of the working environment and timescales.

"As with many of the buildings we're fitting out now, the main challenge is height," he says. Snowhill is 22 storeys and The Lansdowne has 16 storeys of apartments. "The logistics of getting the materials into and out of a loading bay – which, in a city centre, is the size of a postage stamp – is challenging. There's no space for storing materials, so you have to have just-in-time deliveries, which then have to go into a hoist and be taken to upper floors, which has a knock-on effect for every trade that follows you."

The Lansdowne (right) and 2 Arena Central (below) are among the high-profile projects in construction



Cundall's new Birmingham offices focus on biophilic techniques to prioritise staff wellbeing

FIS OFFICE FIT-OUT GUIDE

Cundall's Andrew Parkin was one of two Birmingham-based contributors to the *FIS Client Guide to Office Fit-Out and Refurbishment*, published last year – the other was David Cant of Veritas.

The comprehensive guide recognises that many clients going through a fit-out have never done one before. It holds their hand through the different stages, flagging up issues to consider and making clear the actions they must take.

Launched to widespread acclaim, the guide showcases expertise across the UK and includes a flow chart to help plan an office fit-out, as well as detailed sections covering everything from acoustics and design to safety and recycling.

- Download the guide at: www.thefis.org/membership-hub/publications/client-guide-to-fit-out/

is at the heart of how we operate, so we wanted a way that people could seamlessly integrate between the floors. The natural wood staircase does this, but in a beautiful and simple way."

Above the staircase is a biophilic pendant, a huge circular planter with foliage growing up and down, and controlled lighting above, the intensity of which changes over time. "It's like a sundial and shifts the shadows around the office, mimicking the natural world," Parkin explains.

As the global head of acoustics, you'd expect Parkin to have the acoustics aspects covered. The communal areas have been soundscaped to introduce positive noise into the office in parallel with the biophilic design – natural sounds such as birdsong (see boxout above).

Through the office, the company has in its sights its second WELL Building Standard accreditation – and the first in the Midlands – though Parkin acknowledges that Birmingham and the UK in general still have some way to go when it comes to this wellbeing standard.

"We are getting there," he says, "but WELL certification is still predominantly a US

phenomenon. There are a couple in London, including our offices, and one or two in Manchester, and there are a couple applying for it in the Midlands, but it hasn't happened yet."

Part of the reason, Parkin suggests, is that WELL certification doesn't happen quickly and takes a lot more money and time than other schemes such as BREEAM or SKA. He says: "It involves a more extended justification process to show you are meeting, and are committed to continuing to meet, the requirements of WELL."

"We've been occupying our refurbished space since November, but we're still going through the justification stage for WELL, and I don't expect we'll achieve that within the next three or four months."

Parkin is convinced that the payback from WELL will far outweigh the investment – "The brand impact is huge," he says – but he adds: "We're finding a lot of people here like the idea of WELL, but they can't commit the resources or investment to do it, so they'll do something in the spirit of WELL."

"We're aiming for platinum in Birmingham [the highest level of WELL certification], but that's a tall order. At the very least though, we'll settle for gold"

WORKING IN A WELL FIT-OUT

Paul Chatwin, an associate in Cundall's sustainability team in its Birmingham office in Colmore Row, gives a first-hand account of what it's like to work in an office that's on its way to being WELL certified.

"When other people from outside Cundall visit, they say it seems a lovely environment to work in," he says. "And having lived, worked and breathed in it, I can tell them they're right – although I guess we do take it for granted a bit."

Chatwin says that a pleasant workplace is often more important than the question of salary for younger staff. "Not having a trace of sick building syndrome, but a healthy working environment, is bound to attract and retain more staff," he says. "And although productivity is always difficult to measure, it really does seem to help, especially when we're able to go to different areas in the office to chat and collaborate with colleagues."

This ability to stand and get away from the desks or go to a quiet booth to take a personal call now and again is a real plus for Chatwin. "It's lovely having a rep come and visit me from a manufacturer and we can go and sit in the town hall space with tweeting bird sounds in the background, and plants and biophilic design elements all around us. It just makes for a really pleasant and productive working environment."



As for drylining, partitioning and suspended ceiling opportunities in Birmingham, Taylor Hart director Phil Lewis also has cause for optimism.

"Our forecasts show that we'll have a quiet period for a month or so at the start of the summer, but there's about £16m worth of tenders on about 10 jobs in and around the city that we know about," he says.

"And we've got about £48m on our own books, either for tenders we've had in or tenders we're currently working on."

VARIED PROJECTS

Lewis describes the fit-out work as varied. At Paradise Circus in the centre of Birmingham, two projects have been awarded to BAM Construction, involving offices with retail space beneath – Lewis estimates these will include £5m-£6m in drylining alone. Then with all four universities in the city expanding their academic, research, leisure and residential capacity, Lewis points to more student accommodation projects coming up for tender. "And there are large residential schemes happening in Birmingham, such as in the regeneration of Digbeth," he says, "which offer big opportunities for dryliners."

Taylor Hart's biggest opportunity in the city to date is HSBC's new British retail headquarters. As interiors contractor on the 20,000m², 10-storey building – originally called 2 Arena Central and recently renamed 1 Centenary Square – the project represents the West Midlands-based firm's most lucrative contract to date.

"We started the project with a Category A base build contract to the value of more than £2.5m," explains Lewis, "but then picked up the Category B fit-out contract, which took it to about £5m."

Having supplied and fitted a range of elements – including acoustic suspended ceilings, bespoke bronze metal ceilings, drywall linings and partitions, specialist timber ceilings and ceiling void fire and acoustic barriers – the firm was due to complete in May.

"It's been a major achievement," says Lewis. "We've had eight to 10 labourers working across multiple floors, all taking up hoist time, with various shifts operating. At one point, we had about six managers managing upwards of 80 men every day, sometimes seven days a week. We've had to do nightshifts as well, to keep up with the programme."

Lewis cites the usual complications of working in a busy urban centre. "Unfortunately, you can't stop the traffic, so it's a matter of getting your suppliers on board. Ours have often delivered to us at 6.30am so they avoid the worst of the traffic. It's crucial to get your materials loaded and delivered exactly the way you need them.

"On residential schemes, the big challenge is also the sheer amount of plasterboard that goes into a fit-out – getting it into the building and getting the waste out. Your suppliers have to know what they're doing and the main contractor has to be aware of the volume involved. This is becoming an ever-increasing part of the negotiating process."

Lewis is particularly proud of the bespoke ceilings systems installed in the HSBC fit-out. "The major manufacturers – Hunter Douglas, Armstrong, SAS – have all had an input and some of those ceilings are phenomenal. It's been a very collaborative project, but when we see the finished product, it'll be a building we can be proud of," he says.

As our regional snapshot here shows, there's plenty to be excited about in Birmingham, and the train for further opportunity is not far away.

FINANCIAL GAINS

Laudescher products have completed the new London offices of the Financial Conduct Authority

PROJECT TEAM

ARCHITECT: Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Perkins+Will Global

DEVELOPER: Lendlease & LCR

LOCATION: Stratford

Laudescher are pleased to have supplied various products from their range for the fitting out of the new offices for the Financial Conduct Authority's new offices at Stratford.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is the conduct regulator for 58,000 financial services firms and financial markets in the UK and the prudential regulator for over 18,000 of those firms.

The new building, designed by architects from Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, is based at International Quarter London in Stratford, one of the best-connected places in London, with a unique combination of Underground, Overground, Mainline and DLR services.

This strategic development, delivered as a joint venture by Lendlease and LCR, is offering a new working environment for London. Over 25,000 people will work in the area when the scheme will be fully completed.

The whole district is combined with Stratford's unrivalled sporting facilities and green open spaces, creating a healthy and connected environment for staff to lead a balanced lifestyle.

Workplaces are designed to visually and spatially connect employees and encourage communication, collaboration and innovation.

The FCA has taken 425,000ft² of the new building on the first 15 floors. The interior fit-out was designed by Perkins+Will, a practice renowned for their design expertise in delivering excellent workplaces.

Laudescher products were specified for the wall lining in the Auditorium Waiting Room and the ceilings in the Restaurant where there is also a bespoke timber 'tree'.

The Laudescher products were supplied through



SIG Interiors and installed by Sherlock Interiors Contracting Ltd, who were responsible for the detailed design development and installation.

The wall lining in the Auditorium Waiting Room comprises pre-finished oak slats with acoustic backing panels, the ceiling in the Restaurant comprises pre-finished pine slats in various configurations to accommodate the recessed light fittings.

The pièce de résistance is the timber 'tree', again constructed from Class O pine with a stained finish.

The detailed design of this element provided many challenges and numerous meetings to resolve. The end result was, however, worth the effort and both companies are proud of being given the opportunity to manufacture



Laudescher wood products feature in the wall lining of the Auditorium Waiting Room (below), the ceilings in the Restaurant (left) and the timber tree (far left)



and install such an impressive piece of 'sculpture' for this high-end office space.

The trunk comprises four panels whilst the canopy comprises 67 panels of 29 different configurations composed of slats that have been cut diagonally in solid wood panels to maintain the dimensional stability over time.

Martin Naptin, SIG Regional Interiors Director, underlines: "The success of the project demanded true collaboration, when challenges arose we witnessed teamwork at its best, working together to collectively provide the right solution".

The result went over expectations, with one of the best workplace spaces in London.

Almost 3,800 FCA staff will be moving from their current building in Canary Wharf to Stratford this summer.

After the horrors of the Grenfell Tower fire last June, many called for far-reaching reforms to the building regulations. **Dean Gurden** assesses the impact on the fit-out sector so far



ONE YEAR ON

We live in a reactive society. Drive through any accident hotspot and you'll notice the warning signs indicating successive incidents. But it's taken the Grenfell Tower disaster and the death of 71 people for government and industry to wake up to the fact that the regulations and controls of the building industry are not fit for purpose. Grenfell is set to change the way buildings are designed, built, fitted out and maintained in the future.

It was a tragedy waiting to happen, according to Niall Rowan, chief operations officer of the Association for Specialist Fire Protection. "In the 1970/80s, about 800 people a year died from fire, but that had come down to about 300," he says. "The politicians thought they had solved the problem of fire. But then Grenfell happened!"

The government's response was to form the Safer

Buildings programme, out of which have emerged initiatives such as the Independent Expert Advisory Panel chaired by Sir Ken Knight and the Industry Response Group comprising the Construction Products Association, Build UK and the Construction Industry Council.

The interim report of Dame Judith Hackitt's *Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety* was also published late last year, with the final report released as we went to press.

So what has been the outcome of all this activity? And are professionals within the fit-out sector aware of a shift in attitude?

"I think this is quite a seminal moment," says Peter Caplehorn, deputy CEO of the Construction Products Association, "and we've definitely noticed a change across both industry and government."

"Previously, there were a number of forces pushing for less regulation, as it was seen as irrelevant or unnecessary. But that mindset has changed. There is recognition that there is clearly something wrong with the system, and an acknowledgement that regulation needs to be there – and actually tightened"

Iain McIlwee, chief executive of the British Woodworking Federation, concurs. "There's been a realisation of the sheer risks the industry takes," he says. "People are recognising the importance of looking at the probity of information relating to products."

"They now get why we need third-party certification to ensure that products have been tested. And they are realising that you just can't get anybody to install products, because there is real skill and product knowledge required."

GOLDEN THREAD

A central recommendation of Dame Judith Hackitt's interim report is the requirement of a "golden thread for high-rise residential and complex buildings, so that the original design intent, and any subsequent changes or refurbishment, are recorded and properly reviewed, along with regular reviews of overall building integrity".

FIS is playing its part in working towards this by tackling two key areas: compliance and competency.

Joe Cilia, technical director at FIS, explains: "There is a real lack of evidence regarding compliance and a lack of competence among the people doing the installation. This can run through everything – from design to procurement, installation and maintenance. And, crucially, there is a lack of responsibility. So somebody can change the design halfway through without realising the implications of doing so or being responsible for any outcomes."

FIS is developing an initiative, PPP: Product, Process and People. One aspect of the initiative is to copy the CSCS cards of the operatives installing products to demonstrate their competency. This will develop over time so that those installing can show they have had the correct training to install specific products.

Cilia adds: "If you are asked to supply a product, that's a specification and you should build up a file that says: 'here is the test evidence of these products'. When you deliver to site, make a note of that too. So you're building up a list of evidence. This doesn't happen at the moment."

The association also recommends fit-out contractors take photographic evidence of their work – a simple act that doesn't require any complicated software.

What isn't so simple, says Alex Double, managing director of drylining and fire protection consultancy AD Design Consultants, is deciphering the fire test information provided by the manufacturers to ensure that the designs comply with the manufacturers' recommendations.

"It's a key problem for designers, main contractors and subcontractors," he says. "Often the manufacturer's summary sheets – the information readily available on their websites – or information on the actual products,

"The mindset has changed. There is recognition that there is something wrong with the system and that regulation needs to be there – and actually tightened"

can provide conflicting and possibly misleading information.

"For example, having 'four-hour fire rated' printed on the side of a can of fire foam without reference to the substrate, size, base material, specific application and so on, can lead to fire-stopping products being used inappropriately."

Most fire protection products are part of a system, stresses Rowan. "Half-hour fire-resisting plasterboard needs the stud wall to hold it up – but how thick is the stud wall? Is it timber or metal? How deep is it?"

"To say 'half-hour fire-resisting plasterboard' is shorthand but a misnomer – it should really be labelled as 'half-hour fire-resistant partition composed of this, this and this, with everything specified'."

So how do we avoid future situations where a pick-and-mix approach is used in fitting out buildings? We avoid it by being absolutely clear what is required and what is being specified, according to Caplehorn.

"We must be absolutely certain as to how the materials are best used in a specific context and what we expect their performance to be, so that we have a degree of insurance over how they might perform in an emergency situation," he says.

"To do all this, we've obviously got to be clear about the way in which all the components come together in the final building."

With the publication of Dame Judith's review (see News, page 4, for details) the government will be under pressure to act on its findings quickly. But with so many different aspects to work on and bring together, overhauling the current state of play is going to take time, believes Caplehorn.

"Thankfully, there is goodwill and a sense of urgency across the whole of the industry," he says.

And quite right too. If your roof is constructed poorly, it leaks, so you can take action and call in the builders. But if fire protection or even sprinkler systems are installed badly, you may not find out until it's too late. And the pressure is on the construction sector to ensure that it's never too late again.



Iain McIlwee



Peter Caplehorn



Alex Double



Niall Rowan

USEFUL LINKS

- **Grenfell Tower information** www.gov.uk/government/collections/grenfell-tower
- **Dame Judith Hackitt's interim report** https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/707785/Building_a_Safer_Future_-_web.pdf
- **Construction Industry Council's approved inspectors register** cic.org.uk/services/register.php
- **Construction Products Association** www.constructionproducts.org.uk

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FIS

CONTRACTORS AWARDS 2018

The annual FIS Awards Lunch, held on Tuesday 5 June at The Dorchester Hotel, London, gathered together almost 500 leading figures from the sector to celebrate the achievements of this year's winners. Compere and guest speaker Miles Jupp led the proceedings, and the awards were presented by representatives from category sponsors

THE JUDGES



This year's judges: Tony Pieri (left) and Clive Perry

"Again, it has been a privilege for Clive and me to be judges for FIS and witness first-hand the skill, expertise and ingenuity that typifies the membership of this association. Once more, the quality of the entries has been of the highest order and the bespoke elements that increasingly feature in many of the entries often transform a very good project into an exceptional one.

"We do live and work in turbulent times and, as representatives of the interiors industry, we often have to cope with the pressure of tight budgets and increasingly challenging time constraints. But consistently our end product remains of the highest quality. That in itself characterises the spirit of FIS members, who consistently demonstrate the resolve to do the job on time, within budget and well.

"It has been a pleasure for us to witness such outstanding work. Thanks to everyone for the courtesy and time you have extended to us on our visits."

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 included the following categories:

- Interior Fit Out (up to £1m and over £1m)
- Suspended Ceilings
- Partitioning
- Drywall Construction – Residential
- Drywall Construction – Commercial
- Steel Framed Systems
- Plastering
- Fibrous and GRG new build
- Heritage plastering
- 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



ORNATE INTERIORS

Project: Oldham Town Hall redevelopment, Lancashire
Architect: BDP, Manchester

The judges sum up what makes this transformation of Oldham Town Hall into a cinema and restaurant complex truly great:

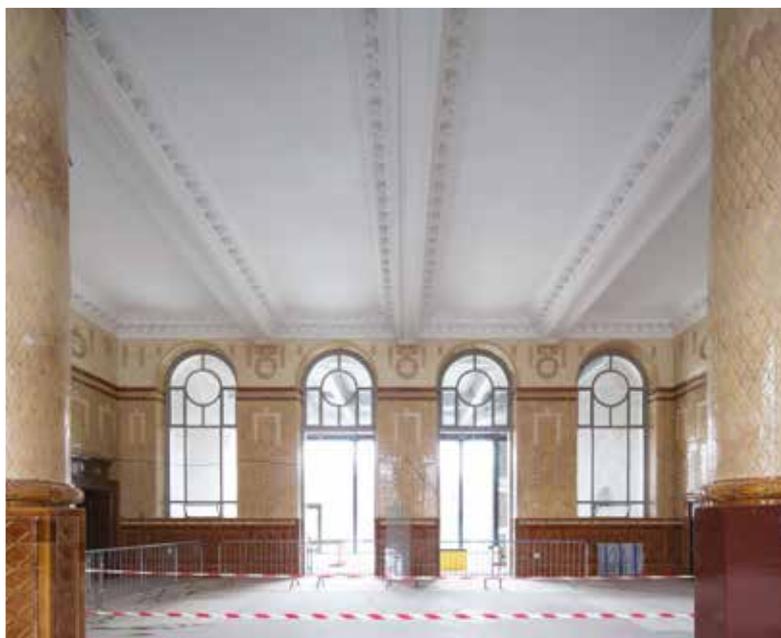
"This project epitomises what FIS is all about: precision, dedication and a desire to deliver a top-quality finished project.

"Where do you start when you are charged with restoring the interior finishes in a building that's been left dilapidated for more than 25 years? How do you bring a building back to its former glory when parts of it have been left open to the elements and many of its key features have simply deteriorated beyond recognition? How do you interpret the lines, curves, detail and form of the previously ornate finishes when much of the original is missing?

"The other key consideration was that, because the building use had changed, simply restoring it to its original form would not suffice. New performance criteria, primarily acoustic requirements, demanded fundamentally lighter weight solutions without compromising the heritage of the original structure.

"The winner of the Project of the Year managed to achieve all this by painstakingly restoring and beautifully transforming Oldham Town Hall."

• This project also won Gold in the Heritage category – see page 32 for further details





GOLD

VEITCHI INTERIORS

Project: Anderson High School and Halls of Residence, Lerwick, Shetland Isles

Architect: Ryder Architecture

Veitchi installed all the internal partitions and wall linings in the new £42m Anderson High School. The project involved internal fit-out works on the four-storey school, including all internal partitions and wall linings, acoustic wall panels and suspended ceilings. Veitchi also supplied and installed more than 700 timber door sets, together with numerous acoustic/fire-rated timber glazed screens and all other general joinery finishings, including atrium seating, performance stage, skirtings, cills and pelmets.

A similar work scope was delivered for the adjacent halls of residence, which progressed simultaneously and provides 80 en-suite rooms and common area facilities.

The judges commented: "All works have been completed to an exceptional high standard and reflect a huge degree of collaboration with all other trades that directly interfaced with the interior fit-out – particularly the M&E. Logistics were a considerable challenge as all products had to be delivered by boat from Aberdeen 12 hours away. Overall an excellent project exuding a high level of quality and workmanship."



SILVER

WORKSMART CONTRACTS

Project: Scotland House, London

Architect: CDA Architects

This 560m² project delivered a workspace, meeting hub and event space in the heart of London for four clients – Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands, Visit Scotland and the Scottish Government. It was completed within 16 weeks, but the multi-trade project in a tight city site meant logistics had to be planned carefully.

The works included an events hub with fitted refreshment bar, featuring Sektor double-glazed partitions, Fyotto double-glazed doors, natural oak-finish flooring and traditional carpeting. The reception boasts a black Caithness stone slab floor with fitted desk, while the front hub's four meeting rooms can be merged into one via a bifolding door.

As the judges agreed: "A myriad of high-quality finishes blend effortlessly into the interior design concept. All work has been completed to an exceptionally high standard."





GOLD

PARAGON INTERIORS GROUP

Project: PKF Cooper Parry, Solihull, West Midlands

A giant pink bull isn't found in most accountants' receptions, but PKF Cooper Parry and Paragon have created 'Parrydise' – an office with artificial grass parkland, crazy golf, mini-trampettes and a running track with bikes, space hoppers and a Segway. Glass-partitioned meeting rooms have coloured front doors, while OSB-clad stepped seating creates a meeting zone dominated by huge WOW lettering. Around 150 finishes and materials include rainbow laminate lockers, timber-effect flooring, and a giant foam block wall that can be rearranged into a meeting room. The judges hailed the project's "cacophony of colour, fabric and form ... All aspects of the fit-out are top quality in the way they have been selected, integrated and fitted."



SILVER

DSP (INTERIORS)

Project: Robinson Structures, Derbyshire

DSP was appointed to provide a complete interior design and fit-out package for steelwork specialist Robinson Structures' new headquarters. The brief was to showcase the firm's products and services, so much of the shell remained exposed, making design detailing more intricate.

The project included an array of bespoke design features: ceiling rafts with striplights; corian reception desk with striplight control; trapezoidal training table; fitted curved Corian kitchen; curved seating booth and dining booth; surrounds for TVs; curved vinyl and carpeted flooring down to bare concrete detailing; steel and glass boardroom table; exposed air conditioning, ventilation and lighting.

"Essentially this was largely a bespoke and unique fit-out," commented the judges. "DSP achieved with distinction a high-quality fit-out meriting the Silver."



GOLD

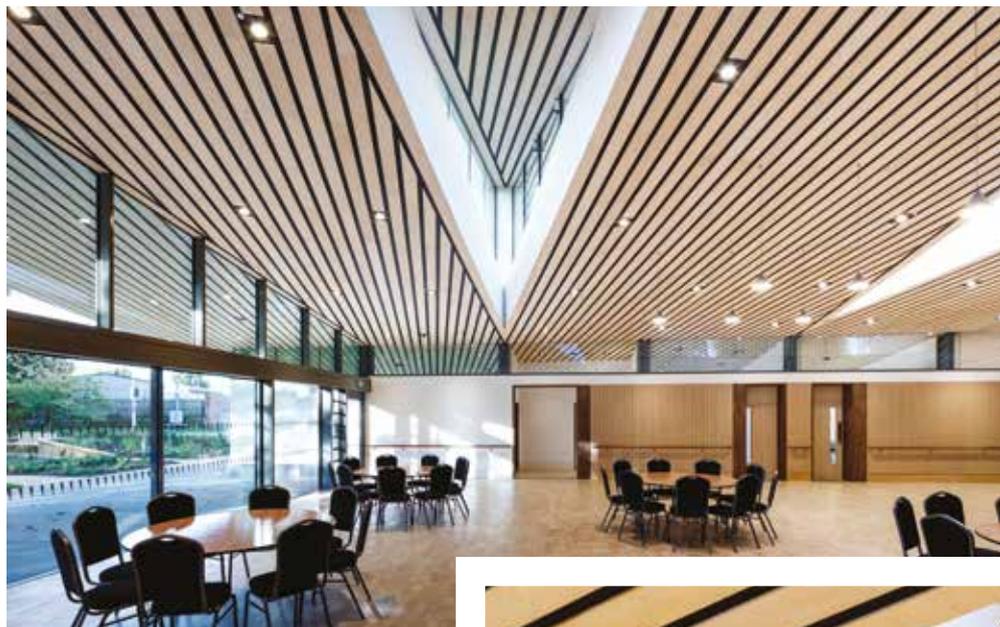
BRIAN HENDRY INTERIORS

Project: Hawkhead Care Home,
Renfrew, Scotland
Architects: Page\Park,
Unum Partnership

Brian Hendry worked with CCG (Scotland) on this day care centre and care home for Scottish War Blinded and the Royal Blind. The £5.5m one-storey day centre was designed by Page\Park Architects, the £12.5m two-storey care home by Unum Partnership.

Bespoke ceilings in the day centre consisted of 1,500m² of birch-faced plywood planks, installed to a 150m radius, following the curve of the steel roof. The installation used Armstrong's DGS faceted framework system and insulation was installed above the planks, hidden by a black acoustic fabric. The project called for careful pre-planning and involved specialist approval by a structural engineer for wind loadings in the external areas.

"The curved ceiling planks are a striking feature of the centre as they are installed internally and externally, giving the impression that the feature is running through the external glazing," said the judges. "This is an excellent project that showcases high-quality workmanship and precise attention to every detail."



SILVER

BPC INTERIORS

Project: Falcon, London
Architect: TateHindle

The project involved new ceilings for the office and client-facing areas in the double-storey ground-floor reception area and mezzanine meeting rooms. Works included fibrous coving, curved GRG ceilings, alongside more traditional plasterboard and metal ceiling elements. The interface of ceiling details and lighting elements produced a final product faithful to the original design intent.

The judges applauded the workmanship: "The finished ceilings are of the highest quality, from the clean crisp precise lines featured in the high-level coffered ceilings in the reception areas, to the GRG borders and metal tiles in the meeting rooms and offices. Overall, a superb blend of ceiling finishes complimenting the feel and style of the original building."



GOLD
OPTIMA CONTRACTING
Project: Bloomberg, London
Architect: Foster + Partners

Optima was involved at an early stage in Bloomberg's new London HQ – it built prototype partitioning products off-site, which were approved by the architect and client before further development. These included freestanding pods with specific sound absorption detailing. The full-height glazed fronts had to be developed to provide a flush finish while incorporating provision for 34mm deflection.

Optima also won the order for the curved angle glazing around the TV area, while in the curved meeting pods and training rooms, it installed drywall and extensive fabric panelling as well as curved flush glazing.

"The combination of Optima's work is stunning," said the judges. "They have achieved what many would think was not possible – single-glazed elements showcase seemingly impossible curves that had to be meticulously surveyed to facilitate successful installation on site."



SILVER
LUSSO INTERIORS
Project: University of West England,
Faculty of Business & Law, Bristol
Architect: Stride Treglown

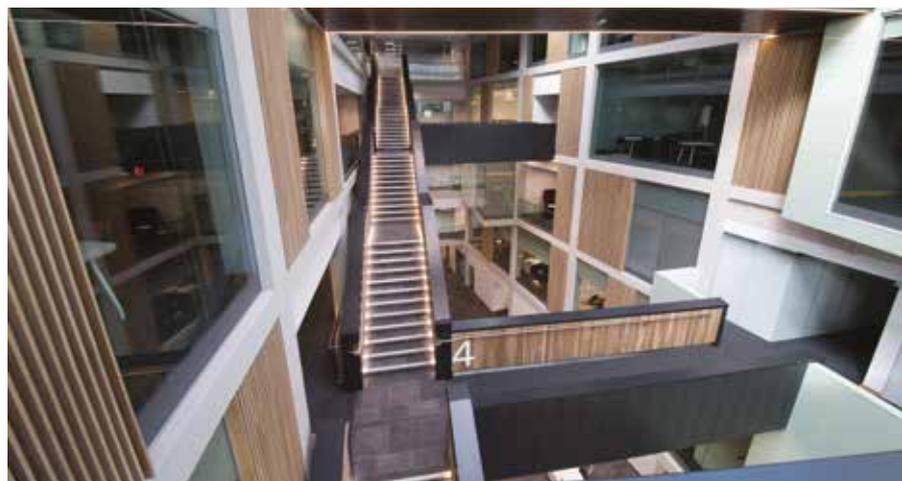
The project consists of two six-storey concrete frame buildings linked via bridges spanning a large central atrium and glazed roof.

Lusso provided large, high-acoustic atria frameless glazed screens on all levels, made all the more difficult by the challenging heights involved, the lattice of the internal walkways and protruding pods obstructing installation.

On the individual floorplates Lusso provided double-glazed partitions, which created learning zones, meeting rooms and office environments.

The judges praised it as a "quality project characterised by many logistical challenges".

"However, Lusso demonstrated significant skill and dexterity by delivering an excellent result, meriting the Silver Award."



Awards | Drywall Construction | Residential

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British Gypsum 

GOLD

MEASOM DRYLINE

Project: Rathbone Square, London
Architect: Make

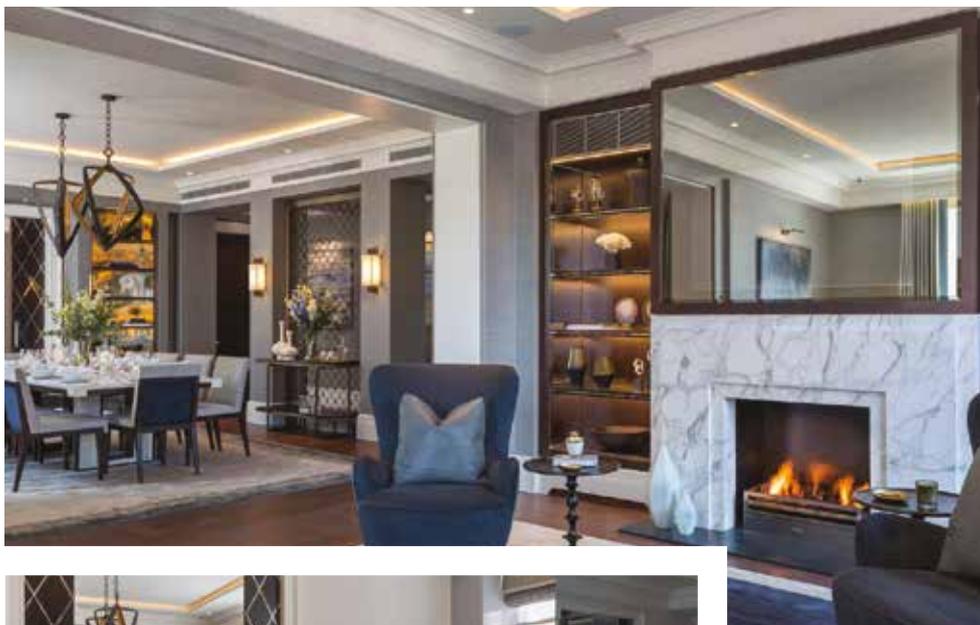
For this luxury development of residential, commercial and retail property in central London, Measom created 142 apartments.

The drywall installation was delivered to a 2mm tolerance, including a series of challenging wall pockets to accommodate sliding doors. To achieve an air leakage specification of $3\text{m}^3/(\text{m}^2.\text{hr})$ and an acoustic requirement of 5dB above building regulation, there had to be continuous coordination with trades interfacing with the drywall construction – BIM modelling was used to resolve these issues. British Gypsum systems used included wall board, sound block, duraline and moisture-resistant board.

In addition to the partitions, Measom completed the ceiling package and the fitting of Profab access panels, and developed ceiling coffer details and lighting shelves in the individual units.

“The high quality of finish evident throughout the project is emphasised by the myriad crisp and precise shadow gap details omnipresent throughout,” the judges agreed.

“The challenging air leakage requirement was achieved by a combination of exceptional workmanship and collaboration with the other trades. Overall an excellent project.”



SILVER

RIDGE INTERIORS

Project: Mayfair House, London
Architect: Derek Williams

Ridge Interiors completed the partitions and ceilings within this prestigious development of four private residences above a ground-floor art gallery in this exclusive part of central London.

Lateral apartments have been created across the first, second and third floors, with the fourth and fifth floors merged to create a stunning duplex penthouse with a private sunken roof terrace.

“The drywall construction had to be of the highest quality to complement all the other finishes, furniture and artefacts that were included in the overall interior design,” commented the judges.

“Ridge Interiors did not disappoint and achieved an excellent and consistent finish throughout that well merited the Silver Award.”



GOLD
STORTFORD INTERIORS (UK)
Project: Which, London
Architect: KPF

Stortford Interiors was appointed by Structuretone and worked with architect KPF to design and install a highly detailed and technical acoustic MF ceiling and lining installation at this refurbished headquarters in London.

The scheme included a new fourth-floor events and conference auditorium space, involving an elaborate drywall installation. The ceilings and lining were composed of raking multi-faceted sections set out to GPS coordinates. Perforated acoustic plasterboard was fused with plain borders, and a series of off-site manufactured 'spine kites' formed a ceiling spine from which sloping and angled interfaces, shaped and fitted on site, stretched to the perimeters. Intimate co-ordination with MEP provided a key challenge, given the multitude of angled interfaces.

The judges were full of praise: "This is a striking acoustic MF ceiling and lining installation, featuring a series of multi-faceted sections, all set out to GPS co-ordinates. The highly detailed and technical installation was executed with a substantial degree of precision and dexterity, making it a very worthy Gold winner."



SILVER
MANSELL FINISHES
Project: Birmingham Conservatoire, West Midlands
Architect: Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

This development for Birmingham City University takes in a 500-seat concert hall, 150-seat recital hall, 100-seat organ studio, and a multiplicity of smaller music rooms.

Mansell installed 5,000m² of Metsec SFS infill, 25,000m² of drylining, 31,000m² of plastering and almost 6,000m² of ceilings, with plasterboard, metal and mineral fibre suspended ceilings and feature timber ceilings in the foyer. SFS, partitions and suspended ceilings were installed in the music conservatoire over six levels, and feature acoustic ceilings in the performance areas. Wall types ranged from single-layer partitions to twin-frame systems with multiple layers of plasterboard and ply lining, while suspended ceilings included single-layer MF and ceilings of two MF frames and five layers of plasterboard.

"Multiple high decibel levels of precise acoustic separation, sound insulation and absorption were required in all areas," noted the judges. "Overall, a high-quality installation well deserving of the Silver."

Awards | Steel-Framed Systems



GOLD

ATKIN TRADE SPECIALISTS

Project: Apartments at Schooner Way, Cardiff

Architect: Austin-Smith:Lord

This project comprised a seven-storey Metframe cold-rolled steel structure accommodating 85 apartments in Cardiff. The statistics for the Metframe structure are what the judges described as “mindblowing”: 18,693 cold-rolled steel members (184 tonnes); 1,248 hot-rolled steel parts (103 tonnes) including large cantilever balconies; 3,488 sheets of decking forming the composite concrete floors; and about 70,000 bolts to connect the steel components.

The Metframe wall and roof panels were pre-assembled off site in Atkin’s Cardiff manufacturing facility. This off-site method, which the judges agreed improves accuracy and reduces site time, was a key factor for why this system was selected.

The judges also applauded the teamwork. “Atkin Trade and Metsec’s in-house design team worked closely with the design team to produce a 3D BIM-compliant CAD model,” they said.

“The precise detail that a project of this nature requires is mindblowing and the quality of the finished article simply stunning. Well done to Atkin Trade Specialists.”

Awards | Plastering

Sponsored by  NEVILL LONG
INTERIORS SYSTEMS SPECIALISTS

GOLD

TAYLOR HART

Project: University of Birmingham pool and sports facility, West Midlands

Architects: Space & Place, Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands

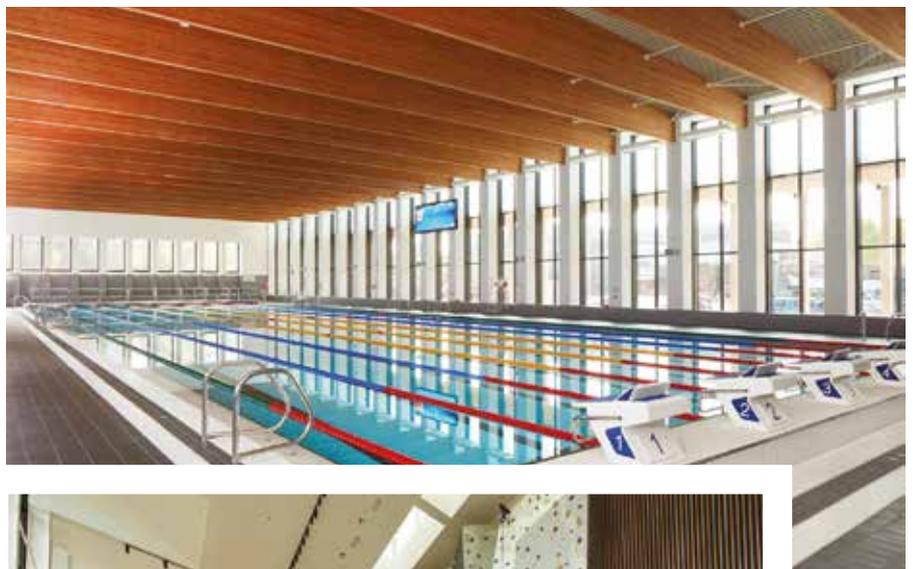
Taylor Hart was engaged by Interserve Construction to install SFS, drywall, ceilings, acoustic rafts, partitions, specialist plastering including Sto internal render, traditional sand and cement, two-coat plastering and fine finishes to Fermacell linings.

The centrepiece to the project is the Olympic-sized swimming pool, now the largest pool in Birmingham, around which Taylor Hart installed 9m high walls to exacting standards and finishes.

The project started in December 2014 and took 29 months to deliver, with many challenges, especially relating to design development.

Materials from Echophon, SAS, Hunter Douglas, CEP, British Gypsum, Fermacell, Sto, and distributed by Go Interiors, contributed to a successful project. During the course of the project, labour levels peaked at 60 with a site management team of three.

“The installation throughout features crisp precise lines and a consistently high-quality appearance – even in critical lighting,” agreed the judges. “An excellent, expertly fixed project richly deserving Gold in this category.”





GOLD

ORNATE INTERIORS

Project: Oldham Town Hall redevelopment, Lancashire

Architect: BDP, Manchester

This redevelopment project transformed Oldham Town Hall over three years into a cinema and restaurant complex. The grade-II listed building, one of Britain's top 10 most endangered buildings in 2009, had been abandoned for over 25 years. Ornate Interiors' brief included lime plastering onto masonry walls, lath and lime plaster to ceilings and the reproduction of ornate plaster mouldings in some 20 rooms and staircases.

In situ mouldings were beyond repair, so all new mouldings were manufactured in fibrous plaster to match the originals. Reproduced mouldings included cornices, fluted corbels, beam casings, column capitals, lighting trough to staircase, ceiling roses and roundels.

A key challenge was reproducing and installing fibrous plaster corbels for the magistrates courtroom that has now become the cinema. The existing corbels were solid casts and could not be installed onto the new acoustic-rated ceiling and were too heavy to be installed solely onto the walls. Fibrous plaster versions were made with pre-manufactured back plates so the corbels could be installed onto the walls and not the ceiling.

The judges were in no doubt: "The finished project exudes the highest quality of workmanship, quality and ingenuity. It is simply stunning, and well worthy of the Gold."



SILVER

HAYLES AND HOWE

Project: Piccadilly Theatre's dome ceiling, London

The project involved refurbishing the main dome of the Piccadilly Theatre, which had been covered up for years. It included a full redecoration and reconstruction of the expanded metal lathing rendered ceiling and surrounding original fibrous plaster works.

Hayles and Howe helped design a methodology to reconstruct the dome by filling in all the large holes and repairing the damage. A large metal grid over the dome, which had supported spotlights and other technical equipment, was removed and a platform put in place to enable the works to proceed. Technical challenges included manufacturing and installing new access points in the ceiling for future shows, designing new features, consolidating the lattice coves and surrounding lighting troughs.

The judges said: "All work was executed to a very high standard within a very tight programme of six weeks and remains well worthy of the Silver award in the Heritage category."



Awards | Fibrous and GRG | New Build



GOLD **SIMPLICITY ABUTMENTS** **Project: Bloomberg, London** **Architect: Foster + Partners**

Simplicity's works at Bloomberg's London building consisted of the manufacture and installation of GRG sections curved in profile, and elliptically shaped atrium bulkheads. Of three profiles over seven floors, the smallest had to be removable, so Simplicity designed a bespoke bracket and channel system to work with the concrete tolerances. The sections were pre-finished in a metal-effect paint finish off site, which meant the setting up of mould sizes, strike-offs and casting had to be perfect. When installing panels, they had to align with 10mm flashgaps in glass balustrading above and 10mm flashgaps in metal pan ceilings below.

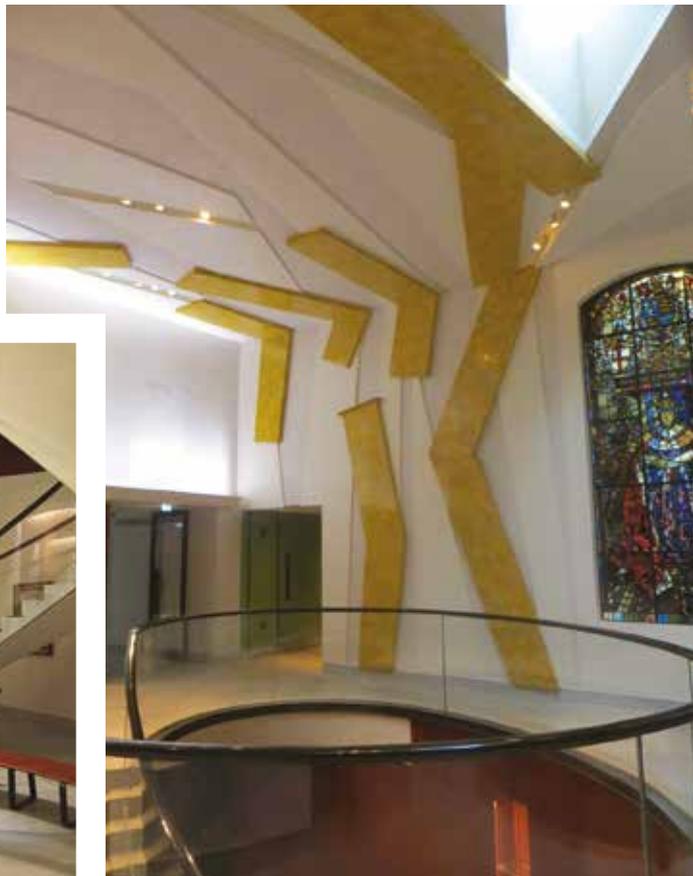
"The finished effect is exceptional," said the judges, "making Simplicity Abutments worthy winners of the Gold."

SILVER **HAYLES AND HOWE** **Project: Leathersellers Hall, London** **Architect: Eric Parry**

For this major remodelling of the Livery Hall in central London, Hayles and Howe applied 18 Scagliola pilasters from the original hall. The architect wanted to reuse the 50-year-old Scagliola in an unusual way – climbing the walls and flying across the ceiling. To complement the Scagliola pieces, the background wall was in fibrous plaster, Hayles and Howe overcame the structural problems posed by the age and condition of the pieces and came up with a hanging system complying with current regulations.

The tolerance was fine, and setting out the entasised pilaster sections to hang away from the walls a technical achievement. Curved work, specialist lighting details and contrasting surface finishes contribute to a high-precision finish.

The judges were suitably impressed: "The Scagliolia were fixed to fibrous plaster walls subtly expressing different levels and shadow line – the perfect combination. Hayles & Howe is a very worthy Silver winner."



Awards | Specialist Joinery



GOLD

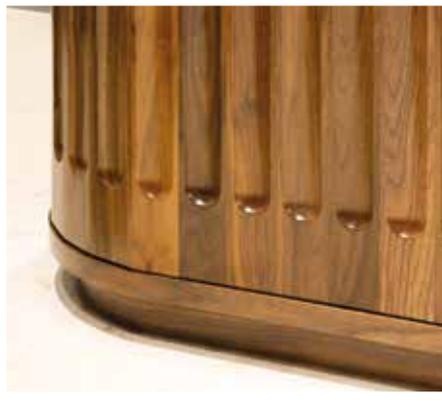
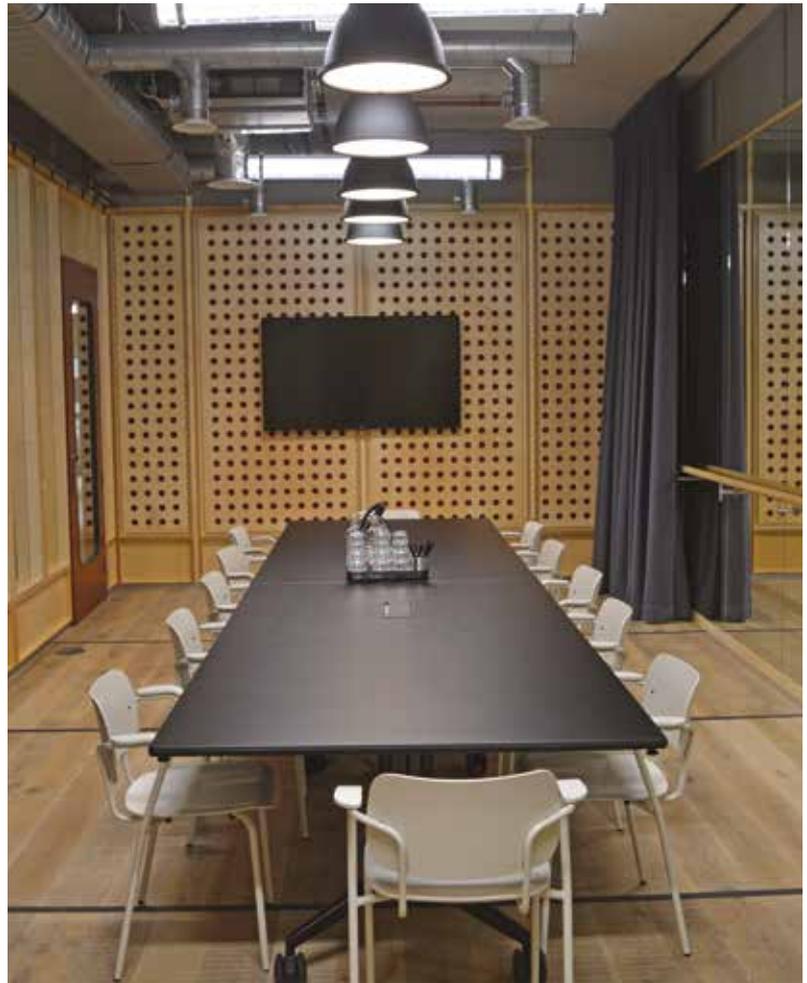
LASER ESSEX

Project: The Office Group, White Collar Factory, London
Architect: Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

Laser Essex designed and then installed a fully bespoke full-height timber panelled partition in this recently opened workspace in the heart of London's 'tech city'.

It incorporates metal studwork and birch plywood panelling, and the assembly was configured to allow full demountability to facilitate reconfiguration of office space as required. A precise site survey was required as all the modules were manufactured off-site and then assembled on site in a 14-week programme.

The judges praised a "unique high-quality installation, developed to meet the architect's brief, which richly deserves Gold recognition in the Specialist Joinery category".



SILVER

STORTFORD INTERIORS (UK)

Project: Quadrant 4, London
Architect: Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

Quadrant 4, a 1930s building off Piccadilly Circus, has been transformed into 48 luxury apartments by the Crown Estate.

Stortford's in-house joinery division delivered a range of bespoke services to create an extravagant reception area.

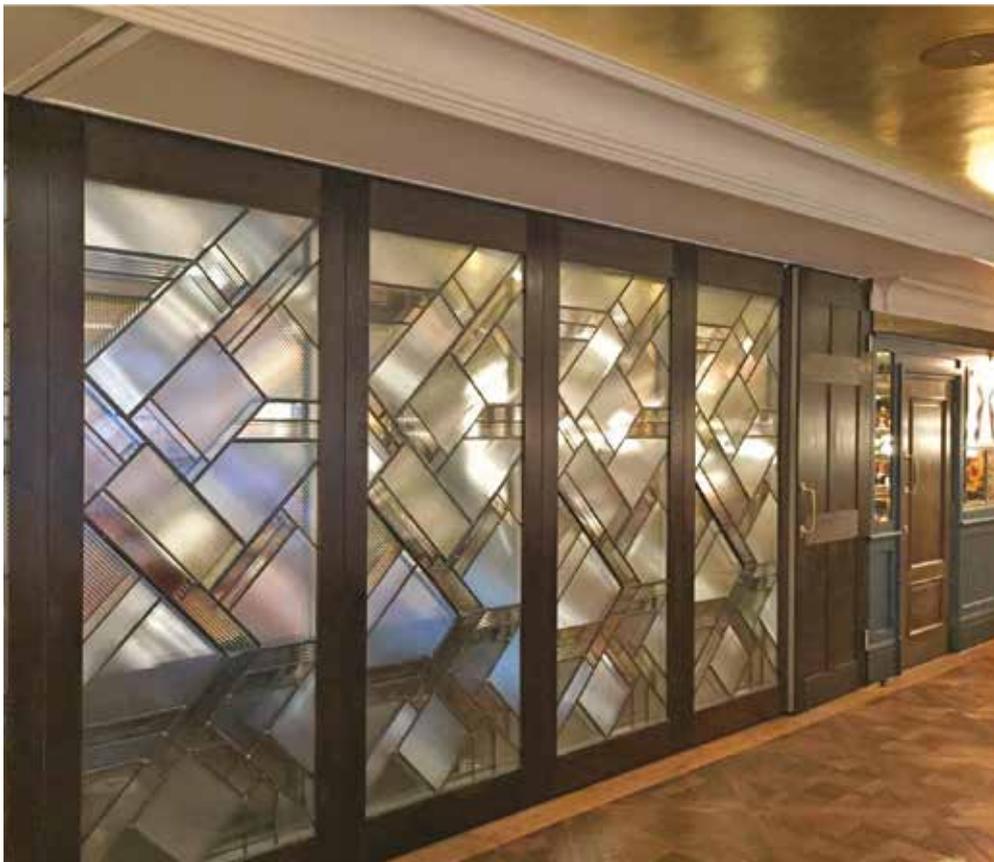
The joinery package included American Black Walnut panelling, credenza, unit and reception desk.

Logistics proved to be a particular challenge because the area was being used as a thoroughfare for other trades and materials that were involved in constructing the apartments above.

Despite this, as the judges highlighted: "Stortford delivered a very impressive high-quality installation, earning it the Silver Award."



Awards | Operable Walls



GOLD

EZYGLIDE

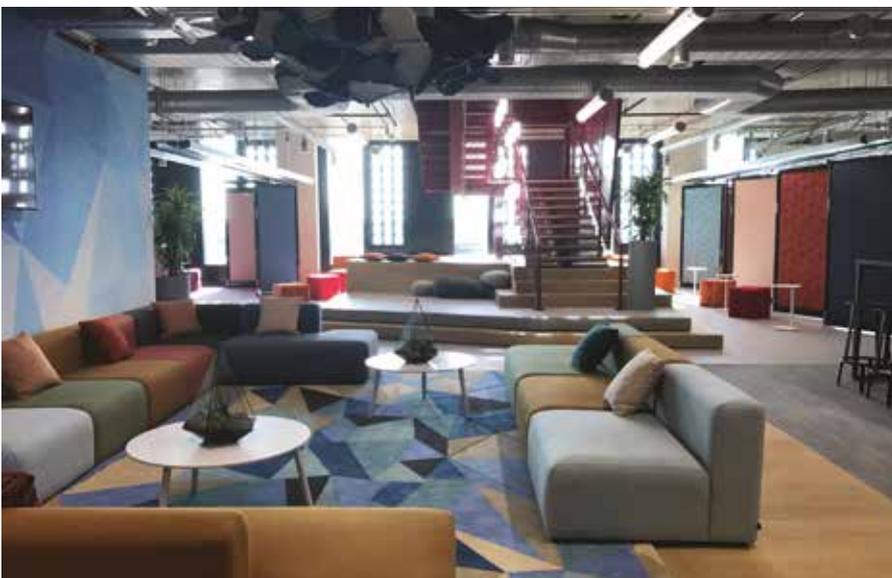
Project: The Ivy, London

Architect: Caprice Holdings

This project called for a bespoke design to incorporate the brand of The Ivy restaurant chain. Ezyglide supplied basic frames with a semi-electrically operated MOVISTA system.

The design and build work included the adaptation of the panel frit and double-glazed units, incorporated into leaded glasswork and timber veneer boards. The panel frames were delivered to site and the double-glazed units were made and installed on site. Veneer boards were installed over the frits, and leaded glasswork over the double-glazed units.

The judges praised the overall effect: "The final result offers the restaurant clientele the illusion of a permanently fixed feature that in reality provides space flexibility and a high level of sound reduction properties. An excellent installation that's well worthy of Gold."



SILVER

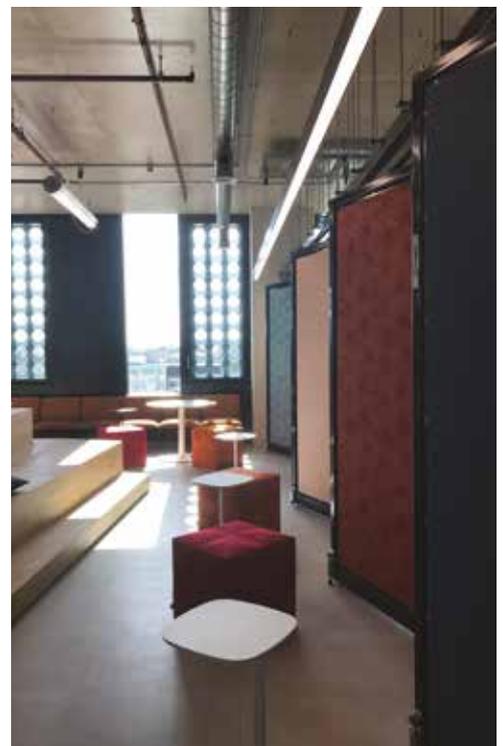
STYLE MOVEABLE PARTITION SPECIALISTS

Project: Adobe, London

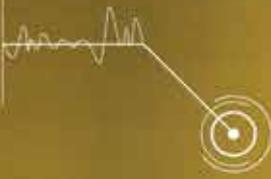
Architect: Gensler

Style created flexible working areas for software firm Adobe. Three products were installed – a vertically rising Skyfold wall, a double-glazed acoustic Dorma Moveo wall and special display pivot panels offering flexible space for top-level meetings or as a staff breakout space.

"The standout feature is the series of Skyfold vertical rising walls," the judges said. "Providing an outstanding 54dB acoustic performance when closed, any observer is mesmerised when, at the touch of a button, the walls gracefully open to reveal the larger open space. An excellent installation meriting the Silver Award."



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