

FIS

FOCUS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FINISHES AND INTERIORS SECTOR

NOVEMBER 2018



FLOWERS OF SCOTLAND

All the winners from this year's Scottish Awards
FIS Conference: business and skills highlights
Meet new FIS chief executive Iain McIlwee
Technical: passive fire resistance and blockchain
Project Futures: new way forward with apprentices



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Fire



Acoustics



Design



Environment

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technical@owa-ceilings.co.uk www.owa-ceilings.co.uk 01784 431 393

OWA

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WELCOME

One debate at the FIS Conference in November was based on Room 101. For those not familiar with the George Orwell book *1984*, or the more recent Frank Skinner TV show, Room 101 is the place where our darkest fears are sent. We extended the concept to deal not just with fears, but the worries and niggles that hold back your business.

It will be no surprise that retentions and payment practice were top of the list (rebates also featured). Managing cash, particularly in the face of thin margins is a nightmare. We often hear of the hundreds of millions of pounds held in retentions, but that's the tip of the iceberg when we factor in the impact on productivity, wasted time, legal fees and energy sapped through worry and by having to constantly fight a rear guard action. These archaic practices pollute the culture of construction, create adversarial relationships, destroy trust and are the biggest barrier to UK construction being truly world-class.

In at number two in Room 101 were issues around quality control, pushing design liability down the chain (and diluting it with too many cooks) and poor programming. Whilst there has been positive progress over the past 12 months, we still hear of inadequate compromises linked to poor design and value engineering. The Hackitt review shows us the way, and the new campaign 100% Hackitt, led by Local Authority Building Control (LABC), is something we should be driving forward.

We didn't get time to debate all the issues fully, but other issues that made it into Room 101 were Brexit, PQQs, mental health stigma, issues around training and apprenticeships, lack of flexible working, a last-minute ordering culture and... Aston Villa!

All of these issues are firmly on the radar for FIS. Our role is to draw the community together to explore and solve common problems, both directly and through our valued membership of Build UK and the Construction Products Association. FIS is the place where members can name their concerns so we can help them consign them to Room 101 forever (although I am afraid the Aston Villa issue may be beyond us).

Iain McIlwee, FIS chief executive

Front cover: Scotwood's award-winning LifeArc project in Edinburgh – see Scottish Awards, p26-32

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Association makes its mark at UKCW

FIS and the finishes and fit-out sector was out in force at UK Construction Week from 8-10 October at the NEC in Birmingham.

The association held two well attended CPD seminars. Andrew Way, associate director at the Steel Construction Institute, spoke on the installation of light gauge infill framing – and why it is not drylining for exteriors.

Meanwhile, FIS technical director Joe Cilia shed light on FIS's Product Process People (PPP) as a process to provide evidence of compliance in light of the Edinburgh schools report and the Hackitt review.

Coinciding with World Mental Health Day, FIS also used UKCW to launch its new campaign, #BuildersBrew, which aims to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing issues in construction. According to the Office for National Statistics, between 2010 and 2015 more



FIS brought people together for its mental health campaign #BuildersBrew

than 1,400 construction workers in the UK took their own lives.

The #BuildersBrew campaign encourages people to talk about their anxieties with colleagues over a mug of tea or coffee, and to support others as needed.

FIS teamed up with Digital College to offer a free course at UK Construction Week – 'An Awareness of Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace' – at a breakfast briefing attended by FIS members and partners. FIS CEO Iain

McIlwee, interviewed by FIX radio at the show, commented: "Mental health issues affect all of us at some point in our lives. We like to think we're bullet-proof, but there are times when all of us need help from people around us.

"Through #BuildersBrew we are encouraging people to take positive, proactive action to support each other. Far from being a sign of weakness, talking openly is something we should be applauding and encouraging."

David Stephenson, founder and managing director of Digital College, said: "It has been great collaborating with FIS and delivering the mental health awareness course at UK Construction Week.

"We want to make people aware that it only takes one hour of your time to complete the course online, making learning very easy, accessible and affordable for your organisation".

● **The #BuildersBrew campaign is an ongoing initiative and FIS would like people to submit images of themselves with their mugs of tea or coffee and post to @fisorg on our Instagram and Twitter platforms.**

iBuiltThis winners announced

The winners of this year's #iBuiltThis awards were honoured at a ceremony at the Surfaces and Materials Hub during UKCW.

The competition, now in its second year, aims to attract people into the sector, particularly younger people. The winners were as follows:

- **Age group: 13 and under** – Hollie Baynes for her project House of Horrors
- **Age group: 14-18** – Naomi Hamilton for her project An Arch
- **Age group: 19 and over** – Jamie Hubbard for his project The Ivy House.

The judging panel included a wide range of experts from across the construction sector, including Amanda Clack, executive director, CBRE; Mark Farmer, CEO of Cast; Steve Coley, MD, Lakeside Ceilings and Partitions; and architect and TV presenter George Clarke.

Nathan Garnett, event director of UK Construction Week, commented: "It's the simplicity of this initiative that makes it so brilliant. There was a great crop of entries across the ages, innovatively designed and built."

● **#iBuiltThis2019 has been launched – go to www.thefis.org/skills-hub/i-built-this-2019**



Hollie Baynes



Naomi Hamilton



Jamie Hubbard



FIS nominee is Role Model

Brooklands College Surrey's head of construction, Christian Hatherall-Good – one of FIS's nominees for UKCW's Role Model campaign to identify unsung heroes – was named among 40 inspirational role models from across the industry. Pictured above with FIS's Amanda Scott (left) and Helen Yeulet, Christian will take part in an outreach programme with colleges and schools. FIS met Christian through #iBuiltThis2017, in which one of his students, Emily Ash, won the 14-18 age category.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

ENCON HIRES THREE

Encon, parent company of Nevill Long, has made three appointments:



Claire Atchison has been named head of supply chain for Encon Group. She joins from SIG, where she was major accounts manager. Prior to this, she spent nine years with Rockfon and then Rockwool.



Paul Golden is now business development director for Nevill Long in London and the South East. He has already worked with Nevill Long, in 1984, but during his career has also worked for CCF, SAS and Armstrong.



Also at Nevill Long, **Jason Hemingway** has been named sales director for the North and Central Region. Jason has worked in the manufacturing and distribution sector for over 20 years, the past five at SIG.

CITB APPOINTMENT



Richard Steedman, managing director of Cameron Drywall Contractors, is one of 10 specialists recruited to CITB's National Council for Scotland, which, alongside councils from England and Wales, will help shape construction and tackle skills issues. He will represent the fit-out sector.

FIS members lead top 20 fit-out firms

FIS members are leading the fit-out field, according to a recent report by online information provider the *Construction Index*. It has ranked the financial performance of the top 20 fit-out specialists, according to their most recently filed accounts. Ten of the top 20 are FIS members, and all of the top five.

ISG leads the table, with annual turnover of £1.7bn – almost three times that of its nearest rival, Overbury. Fit-out is the second biggest contributor to ISG's group revenues, delivering £395.9m to the group's £1.7bn group turnover in 2017 and a pre-tax profit of £11.1m.

Morgan Sindall-owned firm Overbury is ranked second, with revenues of £664.1m, up almost 19% from £541.8m last year, and pre-tax profit of £34m.

According to the firm, the London property sector delivered 82% of its revenues last year. Highlights included winning a place on a £250m four-year framework for improvements to the Metropolitan Police's London estate, a 42,000m² fit-out for the Cabinet Office in Canary Wharf and a 5,300m² fit-out for Amazon in Cambridge.

In third place is BW: Workplace Experts, which in the 12 months to 31 December 2017 increased turnover by 50% to £151m and doubled its pre-tax profit to £4.1m (2016: £2m).

BW CEO Steve Elliott said: "We're thrilled to report our second year of double-digit turnover growth. The results were driven by our continued focus on defect-free projects,

growth in sales outside London and an increase in directly negotiated workload."

South London-based Collins Construction comes fourth with a turnover of £136m – a 50% uplift on last year – and a 79.5% rise in pre-tax profit to £7.9m.

Willmott Dixon Interiors, in fifth, increased its revenues by over a quarter and recorded the biggest increase in pre-tax profits of all 20 companies in the table. Profit more than doubled to £8.3m on a turnover of £128m (2016: £101.2).

Graham Shaw, its managing director, said: "We set a goal five years ago to grow interiors by taking on larger projects, extending our activity in the South East and into the West Midlands, plus targeting more roll-out work and new sectors. This has seen our company secure the fit-out of the Design Museum and the Old Admiralty Building on Pall Mall.

"Our presence on a number of frameworks has also been another route for interiors projects, such as a new London Campus for Coventry University at the Dagenham Civic Centre."

According to the *Construction Index*, total revenue for the fit-out sector has surged by more than 20% to £3,717m (2017: £3,060.3m) and total pre-tax profit for the top 20 has increased from £68.9m a year ago to £97.9m – an increase of more than 42%.

Other FIS members in the top 20 include Parkeray, Paragon Interiors Group, Claremont Interiors Group, Portview Fit Out and Wagstaff Bros.

GYC creates new division

Interiors contractor Great Yarmouth Ceilings has launched a new division, GYC Dry Lining and Plastering, dedicated to residential projects across East Anglia.

The team, led by managing director Stuart Adams, has been overseeing residential projects for several years. But with the number of residential contracts on the rise, formalising the new division has created a clearer proposition for residential developers.



A recently completed project was a development of six executive houses in Gorleston in Norfolk, where the GYC Dry Lining and Plastering team was responsible for tacking to timber studs and ceilings, dot and dab to external walls, skim coat, coving and floor screed throughout the development.

www.gycdrylining.co.uk



Mace rebrands fit-out business

Mace has announced a brand refresh of its fit-out business, which will now be called Mace Interiors, and has appointed former Overbury commercial director Stewart Ward to run it.

Previously known as Como, the new Mace Interiors branding will be phased in across Mace's current fit-out projects and the company will operate under the new brand from now on.

Ward, who joins Mace after 15 years at Overbury, will report to Ged Simmonds, managing director for Mace's commercial and fit-out construction businesses.

www.maceinteriors.co.uk



CONTRACTS

SEC Interiors completes expansion project

SEC Interiors has completed the expansion and fit-out of its offices in Stevenage, where it has been based since 2005.

The project has involved the installation of a mezzanine floor to extend the first floor, creating office space for an extra 18 employees in addition to the 12 who occupy the refurbished office space.

The first floor also now features a new design hub, individual focus zones, as well as hot-desking and co-working areas. Downstairs, meanwhile, has been divided into areas for meetings and a staff breakout space, and an area has been created to use as a showroom, displaying how the firm's furniture and finishes can be used.

www.sec-online.co.uk



Rockfon brings acoustic solution to Welsh school

A wide range of Rockfon acoustic products have been used to create a stimulating learning environment at the new £36.5m Caldicot School building in Monmouthshire.

The ground floor provides specialist teaching and support spaces, while the upper floor consists of teaching rooms arranged in two-storey clusters around a double-height hub area.

Rockfon Eclipse islands and Contour baffles were selected to let the air flow freely around the school and control sound reverberation. In the open circulation areas, square islands work with ceiling baffles to absorb sound on both sides.

The classrooms have large windows, and here Rockfon Scholar ceiling tiles give 86% light diffusion. In addition, Hygienic ceiling tiles were chosen for the school's kitchen.

www.rockfon.co.uk

Stanmore gets to grips with Anthology

Stanmore has secured a £15m project for property developer Anthology on a residential scheme at Wembley Parade, north London.

This huge project – the site is 5,300m² and the total habitable space is 13,800m² – consists of the full envelope, including the supply and fit of steel framing system, cladding, glazing, metalwork, roofing, scaffolding and brickwork.

The contract was awarded in May, with design work starting immediately and façade works commencing in July, and the project is due for completion in November 2019.

By October, the reinforced concrete tower frame was complete up to level 10 of 13, with two outer cores complete and the two inner cores cast up to level 6 of 7. Scaffolding was rising to all blocks with façade works progressing up to level 3.

www.stanmoreltd.co.uk

Ce Solutions takes part in DIY SOS project at Grenfell

Worcester-based design and manufacturing company Ce Solutions has been involved in the BBC's *DIY SOS* project to create a new community centre and boxing gym in Grenfell, London.

Grenfell Tower was home to Dale Youth Boxing Club, which was destroyed during the fire in June 2017.

The pressure was on to design, manufacture and install two bespoke, large movable partitions within a week. The partitions enable four areas within the community centre to be divided into smaller spaces or made open plan.

Ce Solutions operations manager Dale Humphries, who oversaw the project, commented: "We managed to design, build



and install the partitions within a week – it wouldn't have been possible without the support of our suppliers, who pulled out all the stops to make this happen."

The new community centre was opened to the public in October. www.cesolutions.co.uk

Worksmart scores in Ayrshire

Worksmart Contracts has undertaken a major refurbishment of two of the hospitality lounges within the stadium of Kilmarnock Football Club.

The Executive Club has been transformed into the Champions Lounge, with a new reception area and staircase, and the Chairman's Club and boardroom have been given a new look.

Worksmart oversaw a team of local

apprentices, joiners, subcontractors and material suppliers to refurbish all areas to a high standard of corporate hospitality.

The team met the contract requirement to complete within two months, in good time for the start of the new season.

www.worksmartcontracts.co.uk





Swing low sweet panelling

London-based fixings specialist Button-fix has been chosen to complete the makeover of the changing rooms at Twickenham rugby stadium.

The mounting system has been used to enable the client to replace or update the striking Rose of England wall panels that now greet the players as they arrive at the changing rooms.

The membrane pressed laminated MDF panels were locked into position using the Button-fix concealed fixing, allowing each panel to be templated and fitted with precision.

www.button-fix.com

STO sows acoustic solution in garden museum

The StoSilent Distance system from Sto has been specified for the £7.5m redevelopment of the Garden Museum in London, within the Church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, alongside the Thames.

Alun Jones of Dow Jones Architects said: "The building work involved the creation of a cluster of copper-clad pavilions around a cloistered garden area. These house two educational spaces and a cafe, and are connected by covered walkways with concrete floors and floor-to-ceiling glazing. We needed an acoustic environment with a reverberation time of less than 0.8 seconds."

The architects were keen to use the same monolithic ceiling in each of the new areas at the museum, featuring a spray-applied finish with a finely textured surface.



● Meanwhile, StoTherm Classic M insulation has been used in the Portobello High School in Edinburgh. The EWI system was finished externally with a through-coloured silicone render. The insulation was fixed to the substrate using the Sto-Rotofix Plus system – a helical spiral fixing that allows the boards to be mechanically ready for rendering. www.sto.co.uk

© Anthony Coleman

PRODUCTS

ECOPHON SOLO RANGE

Ecophon has added to its Solo family of free-hanging acoustic panels, introducing larger sizes, integrated luminaires and new baffle designs.

The new sizes include a 3,000mm x 1,200mm rectangle and a 2,400mm x 600mm thin rectangle. Combined lighting and sound absorption options include the Ecophon Line luminaire, one of three in the Focus range, integrated in the 2,400mm x 1,200mm Solo panel.

Solo Rectangle Line comes with the opal integrated in the panel,



Ecophon Solo range

so installation involves hanging the panel, adding the luminaire and connecting to the lighting system.

Among the new baffles are the Solo Baffle Wave and Solo Baffle ZigZag, designed to complement traditional straight-edge baffles. In addition, the new Solo Baffle on Wall allows architects to continue the baffle design onto the walls.

www.ecophon.com

LAUDESCHER WOOD PANELS

Wood panelling specialist Laudescher has enlarged its Linea 3D range of panels, composed of solid wood slats for wall cladding and suspended ceilings, with two new versions – Bamboo (pictured) and Bamboo Wave.

Created using 3D machinery, the range allows designers to deal with different volumes, rhythms and light and can be adapted to many environments. The standard panel comes as 1,800mm x 600mm but can be customised.



Laudescher wood panelling

The spacing between the slats can be adjusted to suit each project – a sound trap effect between the slats and panels adds to the product's sound absorption characteristics. A wide range of Wax Color shades is available.

www.laudescher.com

ETAG DRILL FIXINGS

A new product from Etag Fixings UK allows single and double socket holes to be cut into plasterboard up to 32mm thick. The Quadsaw is a drill attachment that comes with six blades and can drill a square hole within 30 seconds. Standard single and double socket sizes can be cut to any height, and the blades can be

changed quickly and simply. Etag says there little dust is created, no hacking is required, and the tool leaves no damage to the plasterboard.

www.etagfixings.co.uk

OWA FIRE SAFETY GUIDANCE

A new booklet from OWA – *Helping to create safer buildings* – sets out UK standards and regulations on fire safety, and provides guidance on fire-resistant ceilings. The document offers fire guidance for educational buildings, particularly in light of evidence in Building Bulletin 100 that one in 20 schools experience a fire each year. In addition, fire guidance for healthcare buildings is covered, including the need to create separate fire safe compartments and the need for a compartment floor to be protected for 60 minutes from below.

• A free copy of the booklet can be requested by emailing technical@owa-ceilings.co.uk or calling 01784 431393

MISTER FIX-IT

Fitness fanatic **Iain McIlwee**, FIS's new chief executive, is in no doubt the association and its members can stay stronger together and help turn the construction industry round. **Chris Wheal** hears his vision for the future

Tell me about your career.

I started life as a materials engineer – my masters degree was in analysing the economics of engineering and development. But although I'm great with the theory, in practice I'm all thumbs. I'm still fascinated by how things work, but I was always drawn towards a people-focused role.

My first job was at a scaffolding yard. After that I worked in an engineering consultancy and then I was offered a job at the British Plastics Federation.

I was interviewed in a pub by a gentleman in a cravat from the old school of trade associations. He said to me: "We're intrigued by your application because you seemingly have none of the prerequisites required for the role." In the end, they brought me in to be a researcher.

What a privilege it was to work for a trade body – you had unfettered access to some of the top business minds in the industry and you had immediate trust from them.

I became the business development lead, started running the export side of the business, and slowly but surely became relatively senior on the team.

I realised that unless I made a change, I was going to be typecast. I went back into construction, through the Federation of Master Builders, as London regional director, doing membership growth and dealing with construction disputes.

I then did three years for the Professional Contractors Group, which covers freelance IT and contracting.

I'd loved working at the British Plastics Federation, and when the British Woodworking Federation job came up, I saw an opportunity to lead a similar type of organisation, dealing with probably one of the most

sustainable construction materials you can have. I did seven years there and the organisation is now a lot bigger and stronger.

What persuaded you to join FIS?

I knew my predecessor at FIS, David Frise, well. Some of the association's strategy, such as PPP – Product, Process, People – had been drawn from work we had done together, so it was a natural progression.

I see Grenfell as the 9/11 moment for the construction industry – I am driven by a need to fix things and construction does need to be fixed. There's no excuse for not building a new building to the requirements of

"I don't want FIS to be the construction industry's best kept secret"

the regulations and making it safe and attractive and acoustically robust and all of those things. It's not beyond our wit. It's just that we still don't do it.

If construction could put all of its powers to good, rather than dealing with all of the day-to-day shenanigans, we'd be in a better place. I'm driven by the need to fix that. And I see FIS as very much a part of the solution.

What is your priority for FIS?

Core is to grow the membership – and FIS deserves that growth based on the work that it's doing.

I'm a firm believer that if a trade association continues to do the right

things, the membership will grow. We need to focus on making sure people understand the value we are adding.

One of the areas I'm looking at is the parameters of FIS – because if you look at the finishes and interiors sector, it's broader than the membership is at the moment. A lot of what we're doing benefits a wider community. I want all the credible companies that are aspiring to be better to be involved in FIS.

Having a bit more of a public affairs and PR voice is another priority for me. I don't want FIS to be the construction industry's best kept secret.

If you look at the work we've done around retentions, look at the work we're doing around supporting competency in the marketplace, we've got really strong opinions and we need to start projecting those a bit more.

I want us to be seen as a disruptive voice for change, and to do that we have to amplify our messages.

How will FIS members be involved in this vision?

My job should be the easiest thing in the world – the members are active stakeholders, they tell me what they want to achieve, so I've just got to match the resources we've got to the requirements they have and deliver against their objectives.

I want more active members, so I need to activate them. One of the biggest challenges we face is that we need some of our members' time. Of course you need money to make the organisation work, but more than anything else, you need a little bit of time. Our challenge is how to minimise the time our members give us to maximum effect.



“I am driven by a need to fix things and construction does need to be fixed”

How do you think the construction industry needs to change?

We need a productive and profitable supply chain. The contractual battling that goes on around the industry is ineffective waste.

There’s no place for cash retentions in the construction industry – there is none. I support Build UK’s objective to get zero retentions, but we need to bring the deadline forward, realistically within this government, because if we kick it to 2022 then we could be looking at dealing with two governments.

Let’s invest more money in the industry and less money in legal fees. I have the utmost respect for the legal profession, but I have a drive towards the construction industry giving lawyers less money than we currently do.

There’s also waste in people. How do we optimise the amount of time we invest in people, to deliver competent people to the construction industry? How do we make construction as attractive a place to work as possible?

Construction is ripe for disruption. It should be attracting some of the best and brightest to say: “Do you know what, I could make a difference”. There are huge opportunities.

Skills is a big issue in the sector. How do you intend to tackle that?

Our three-piece strategy focuses on Products, Process, People. People is without doubt the most important part. What is the competence of the people? I’m an engineer. I look for the formula – and even competency is a formula. It’s skills, it’s attitude, it’s knowledge and it’s experience. They’re the ingredients of competency. We need to make sure we instil those effectively in individuals on site and throughout the supply chain.

We need to change the way we think

about people in construction because we tend to think about them as a commodity, not a customer. If you look at the FIS skills programme, it's probably one of the most ambitious and disruptive skills programmes in construction at the moment.

We just can't accept that 90% of people who start a level 1 diploma in construction never work in the industry. We need to get back to growing our own and owning what competency is. We have the aspiration to have a fully carded workforce. You could be the best person in the world but how do we know? It's important how we record it.

How important is FIS to construction?

I honestly believe trade bodies will be central to change in construction as they're about culture and collaboration.

The main thing is how we deliver productivity, profitability and people competence through a process that's manageable for all – that's our big challenge. And how we make sure our sector is represented in the supply chain, how best to work with us and the value of FIS membership.

We're still one of the largest trade associations vetting people on a regular basis against a membership criteria. We want to keep that – and do more of it. I want to build on the reputation of FIS on a core principle of ongoing vetting.

If you look at the Hackitt review, it's up to industry to own its own problems and start looking at ways of working more effectively. This will only happen when we work together and become the alternative to government driving it. We don't like it when it's done to us, we don't like it at all.

Trade associations have changed massively over the past 20 years. The *Competition Act* was perhaps the biggest driver – it forced modernisation. There were certain things they did that you're not allowed to do now. And lots of trade associations lost their way and the model changed massively.

If you look at society now, trade associations are probably the most modern of modern businesses. They're about collaboration, about community, and it's around networking – all the things that drive modern businesses forward. But it still comes down to individual members. We are still a community of individuals.

It's like a family at times. You have common sets of values, a shared history and shared interests, but you have proper spats. And what you hope is that the overriding value of that community



will draw you back together. I think FIS is exceptionally well placed to be that platform for change, and I am very excited to be part of this.

What makes you happy?

Well, certainly not Brentford Football Club. I suppose what makes me happy is the optimism my son still has in Brentford Football Club. We go to most home games and away when we can. My wife and daughter are also big fans – we go as a family and it is precious time.

But other than that, it's keeping active and busy. I try and set myself goals every year. Some of them are work-related and some of them are just about stretching myself as an individual. My underlying philosophy on life is to 'learn to live uncomfortably'.

What makes you angry?

The inability to change things – when all logic says things should change. I find that hard to deal with. I hate it when people say: "We've done this before" or "We tried this before" - they are two of

my least favourite expressions. There are always reasons not to do stuff.

Probably my least favourite saying in the world is "yeah, but". And a lack of manners. Manners cost nowt.

How do you relax outside of work?

Healthy body, healthy mind. I like to exercise and keep myself as physically fit as I possibly can. Every year I set myself some kind of fitness goal, such as running a marathon, which I have done. At the moment I want to do 5km in under 20 minutes – I was doing alright until I pulled my back out playing rugby.

I still play rugby. Well no, technically I'm retired – officially and formally I am retired – but every now and again the lure of the changing room drags me back. I play from time to time for The Political Animals, a rugby league team linked to the House of Commons. That's where I picked up my latest back tweak.

IAIN MCILWEE'S FAVOURITES

Reading material: Twitter and LinkedIn

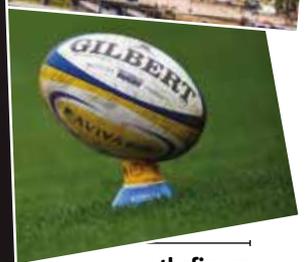
iPod track: *Piano Man* by Billy Joel

Holiday location: Somewhere remote, with a deep sea, a bit of history and somewhere to climb

Favourite city: London

Hobby: Rugby

Drink: Guinness





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GROWING YOUR BUSINESS

This year's conference, held at Worsley Park Marriott Hotel, near Manchester, brought together members eager to learn from specialists in contract risks, training, technology, Brexit and much more. **Chris Wheal** reports. Photographs by **Prestige Photography**

FIS Conference 2018 was very much a case of out with the old and in with the new. Freshly appointed chief executive Iain McIlwee had cut short his family half-term holiday to fly back from Seville for it. But this was no flight of fancy. He ensured delegates received practical advice on the conference theme, 'Growing your business in a changing market'.

A top lawyer told members the legal contract terms they should include and which wordings to avoid. FIS skills and training experts detailed how to secure CITB funding and better use apprenticeship schemes. A leading construction coach showed firms how to identify their business's purpose to boost profits. And several technology firms demonstrated how to streamline processes and provide evidence of workflows, staff skills and jobs completed. The FIS solution known as PPP – Product Process People – was very much in evidence.

But delegates also had a chance to dictate



Pictured clockwise from far left: FIS president Andrew Smith; Richard Hulbert, Trappco; skills workshop; Amanda Scott, FIS, and Molly Brady, Astins; Joe Cilia and Helen Yeulet, FIS, with Geraldine Fleming, HKA; technical workshop; Steve Coley, Lakeside, and Rob Harriman, Harriman Contracting; Sarah Crawford and Barry Chapman, Chalkstring



what they wanted their association to do next. Playing a live version of the TV show *Room 101*, FIS members identified which current practices and problems dogging the construction industry should be consigned to Room 101. This was a chance for them to flag up to McIlwee what he should prioritise in the coming year.

McIlwee first set the scene. And what a changing market it was – the collapse of Carillion, the fall in new office orders, a Brexit deal being “95% agreed”. These were the known changes. Ahead were many unknowns – potential tariffs on products and, worse, delays at borders.

With as much as 25% of materials and products used in the UK construction industry arriving from Europe, and such imports likely to be low down the priority list compared with perishable foods and high-value consumer goods, a no deal Brexit could be a disaster. One speaker even suggested firms hire storage space and start stockpiling now.

The fallout from the Grenfell fire – in which 72 people died “not three miles from where I was born”, McIlwee said – would be significant. The Hackitt review had come up with 53 recommendations and made clear that

construction had to change or die. But McIlwee expressed his frustration at the way civil servants were carving up the review potentially to dilute it – FIS was currently involved in four separate government initiatives post-Hackitt.

He was clear the sector had to change or have unwanted, government-led change imposed on it. He put up photos of the Empire State Building, completed in 410 days in 1931, and the Shard, completed in 1,223 days in 2011, to show that the sector’s productivity had to improve.

But he later flagged up that seven construction workers had died building the former, while none died building the latter. That was evidence that the sector could improve, he said.

Hackitt pointed to products needing to be better tested and certified, the installation process being independently verified, and workers being fully trained, certified and their skills updated and refreshed – with no exceptions.

To illustrate the point, McIlwee showed a photo of himself crossing the finish line of an extreme marathon. He said it gave a misleading impression. He’d not read the small print, so despite the course including a significant hill,

he had trained on the flat, the race had taken him seven and half hours to complete, he’d been badly injured and hobbled across the line.

But he now had a certificate saying he was an extreme marathon runner. The certificate was worthless, he suggested. He could not do it again and certainly could not repeat it regularly. The message was clear: there has to be a better and more rigorous way to measure people’s competency.

The conference ended with the sector’s fears and hates being consigned to Room 101. The obvious – retentions and late payment – went straight in. Others prompted some discussion before being consigned – rebates offered by product suppliers to influence choice was one – and value engineering took a battering from delegates before being dumped.

The industry’s opposition to flexible working was also up for debate, as well as the mental health issues many in the sector experienced. FIS skills delivery director Helen Yeulet said: “The next generation are looking for a work-life balance. They will look for three or four days a week working. There is no reason why the construction industry can’t do this.”

And it will have to if it is to recruit much needed staff.



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CEILING

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PARTITIONS

LEGAL ADVICE: CONTRACT RISKS

In Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part II, Act 4, Scene 2*, one of tax protester Jack Cade's men, Dick, famously says: "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers." It's a sentiment many FIS members would share. But the smaller firms further down the supply chain do have some legal friends, and Geraldine Fleming, partner at construction specialist HKA, is one of them.

Fleming ran through the four main risks faced by FIS firms in the small print of contracts, and flagged up contractual changes FIS members could make.

Topping the risk league table was Brexit – firms should be wary of unconsciously taking on Brexit risks in contracts, said Fleming. If tariffs are levied, who will pay? And if products are delayed, or workers prevented from travelling and working, who gets penalised for the delay?

She recommended FIS firms include a Brexit clause in all new contracts so that any additional costs or time delays caused by Brexit are added to the contract price or time. The end customer should take on those risks, not the one element in the supply chain worst affected.

Fleming also urged firms to check the work status of all current EU nationals and to take steps to ensure they can remain in the UK working after March 2019 or any extended transition period.

A second big risk, Fleming said, was "design risk". Firms that make changes to plans and designs begin to take on design risk and

need to clarify in contracts what level of risk they are carrying.

She said accepting in contracts that every change they implemented would be "fit for purpose" was too big a risk. "You are effectively guaranteeing the result," she explained. Instead, state in the contract that any design variation you make will be done with "reasonable skill and care".

Fleming was scathing about architects who get away with not taking full design responsibility by using such get-out clauses as "taking advice from a specialist contractor". She said this meant the contractor was taking on the design risk.

"You wear your 'happy to help' badge and fill the gap in the design documents, but you then become liable," she warned.

"At Grenfell, 30 different firms had a finger in the pie of design."

Her ultimate solution was clear: "We should



Geraldine Fleming sharing her expertise with FIS chief executive Ian McIlwain (left), Steve Coley (above) and others

pay architects the right money for them to take full responsibility for design." Until then, she told FIS members: "Do not sign a contract with 'fit for purpose' design liability."

Fleming's third risk was time. She urged members to make sure timescales were realistic but also that extensions for specific named events and circumstances were explicit. They would vary for each contract but should be listed. She said the contract should be explicit about how time extensions would be triggered, who would be notified and by what method.

She warned against relying on a 'force majeure' clause because lots of things that cause time delays would not fall into that category. Lawyers were debating whether Brexit would fall into that category – Fleming thought not.

Reduced weekly rates should be negotiated for liquidated damages, as should a cap on total

damages for being late, added Fleming. Too many firms were being forced to pay for a late-running project when the lateness was not their fault.

Money was Fleming's fourth risk. Payment terms should be explicit and include the process for invoicing and payment. If a late-payer is shown to have failed to follow correct procedure, including under the Construction Act 2009, they will fall foul of an adjudication case.

But companies should chase up accounts departments rather than wait, Fleming said. Check the invoice was received, check when payment is due, confirm, chivvy, remind. Get to the stage where the accounts department just wants to pay you to get you off their back.

And this should be done fearlessly, she urged. "The accounts department are not the people who will decide whether or not you get your next job."

COACHING TOWARDS PROFITABILITY

Construction coach Maria Coulter said FIS members should look at where they were burning cash. They needed to identify what was losing them money and change those things.

Examples included staff and contractors leaving early each day to catch cheaper trains, one unproductive subcontractor holding up others, money lost through poorly worded contracts, and bad planning and materials ordering resulting in spending one day a week at the builders merchants.

Work out what you could do with the extra time or cash from making improvements, advised Coulter.

She also showed how the most successful companies had a clearly thought out sense of purpose, and that all FIS firms should identify their own purpose and values. "Why do you get

out of bed each morning? Why do you do what you do?" she asked.

Having a purpose can help focus and engage staff, so identify how you communicate your purpose. Having identified the why (the purpose), set out the how (the process and specific actions to be taken) and the what (the results you want to achieve).

And tell people both internally and externally. Get site managers and staff to come up with their own ideas of how to demonstrate the purpose and values. And make your purpose and values clear to customers and the public, including on your website – many firms in the sector had the dullest websites making similar bland statements, Coulter suggested.

She asked delegates to identify where they wanted to be in 10 years, working back from that, they could decide where they needed to



be in three years, how far they needed to move toward that in one year, and what they would need to achieve within the next 90 days.



SKILLS FOCUS

In a workshop, *CITB – maximising your grant claims*, CITB's Michael Lennox and FIS's Helen Yeulet and Amanda Scott advised on the new grant and levy scheme implemented in April 2018. The workshop helped delegates navigate the new CITB Training Directory and automated claims process, updating them on what is new and what is out of date, and how to make the levy work for their business.

In a separate session, Yeulet and Jill Nicholls of the Institute for Apprenticeships looked at *'How to get a return on investment on apprenticeships'*. They set out what help is available to employers to get the most out of taking on apprentices, including information on funding, training and qualification grants from the CITB and how the Apprenticeship Levy can help with supporting and qualifying apprentices.

TECHNOLOGY TO HELP

Product Process People (PPP) is FIS's response, not just to Grenfell but to school building collapses and a spate of other fires, as well as general standards in construction. Failures happen because of an individual element or combination going awry. The wrong product will

cause problems; the right product fitted wrongly will cause problems; the right product fitted using the correct method but by a worker without the right skills will cause problems.

Too often a poor product is fitted incorrectly by an incompetent person – and FIS has developed PPP to tackle just that.

Records will have to be kept, evidence gathered, photographs taken. FIS technical director Joe Cilia suggested a "competent person" regime be put in place for the installation of many products, which would mean providing evidence of that person's qualifications, the methodology employed and the product's test results.

Technology is going to be part of the solution, and several firms in sessions at the conference and as exhibitors, were on hand with ways to help. These included Chalkstring, Trappco, Re-flow and Donseed, which provide various digitisation options, electronic form filling, evidence gathering and people management systems, including on mobile apps and back-office systems.

Workers could be identified by a fingerprint scan that linked them to their CSCS card data, which includes qualifications and training records. Via mobile phone, they could record

TECHNICAL HELP

In a separate session – *'From paper to data'* – experts from software houses Chalkstring and Trappco joined Cilia to explain why firms should consider implementing technology, what's available and the potential pitfalls – such as using disjointed systems or relying on spreadsheets for managing business-critical data.

They demonstrated the Chalkstring app,

which brings together information on the cost and quantity of materials, special pricing and the ability to call off materials from site without the risk of over-ordering or missing discounts.

The Trappco solution enables organisations to convert existing paper forms into electronic versions, where data can be viewed and managed on a dashboard.

Coulter also focused on another key area: people. Do current staff and contractors have the correct skills and work to the standards you want? And are the right people doing the right jobs? Be aware that not everyone can excel at everything, she said, but that each person has strengths. And do they work as a team or are there disruptive individuals who need to be ousted?

Coulter said firms needed to work out how to attract, retain and grow the right staff. "The fear is that if you train them, they will leave. But what is worse is that you don't train them and they stay," she said.

Productivity and process were also important. Drill down your business plan so that everyone knows what performance they need to provide for the business to achieve its plan. Make sure job descriptions and performance management work towards that and that everyone knows what you want them to do. And find out how your people rate you, said Coulter.

Using a profit wheel diagram with 12 spokes, each with a statement about an aspect of their business, she asked delegates to rate them from one to 10. Areas that scored low were possible cash-burning areas where improvements could be made.

Coulter ended by drawing delegates' attention to 13 lectures and podcasts entitled 'If you had one hour to change your business, what would you do?', which are available until the end of July 2019 at www.1hrtochange.com.

– with date-stamped and GPS location-stamped photos – their installation methodology. And each product could be scanned in and registered.

This data is then stored in the cloud, making it accessible for years to come.

Cilia warned any ditherers: "If we don't digitise, the government is going to do it to us. It is going to be the Nanny State and we won't like that."



BUSINESS TOOLBOX

Dave Rainbow, owner and director of Results Agency, held a useful session on *Strategies to drive demand and increase sales*.

He took delegates through what they should consider before embarking on any marketing or sales activity. He emphasised setting clear, measurable objectives and knowing how to win the right kind of work – do your homework and speak to the experts, he urged.

Rainbow set out the rules for outsourcing – most importantly, to be very selective about who you choose to work with. And he called on businesses to measure everything, to test, learn and adjust. Ask who you are and how you want to be perceived. What type of people do YOU choose to buy from?



SOCIAL VALUE

The conference's host city of Manchester provided a local example of how companies can win contracts by demonstrating more than just their own competence and value for money but their social value too.

Mike Cunliffe, principal economic regeneration officer at Manchester City Council, outlined how his council was awarding contracts based on 20% social value. He said the council used to work on 60% price and nearly 40% quality, with just a tiny bit of emphasis on social value. That was now 40% price, 40% quality and 20% social value.

Manchester City Council was commissioning £5.14bn of construction projects, and the 10 councils in the area combined were spending £1.2bn. Since the Social Value Act 2012, all councils across the country were commissioning based on social value in similar ways to Manchester.

This meant companies bidding for work had to demonstrate they were putting something back into the community. They might offer job opportunities to local people, be a Living Wage employer, offer local work experience, support local schools, charities and volunteering, or a whole host of other examples of giving that little bit back to society.

Cunliffe believed most firms didn't need to do anything new. "Just tell us what you already do," he said. Provide case studies and celebrate them. Perhaps carry out a social value audit and present that. "Don't be afraid to say what you do. Use social media to promote it," he said.



Demonstrating your business provided social value would be vital. "That 20% might be the difference between you winning work and not winning work," Cunliffe said.

In the wake of Grenfell, passive fire protection systems have never been more in the spotlight. **Dean Gurden** finds out whether attitudes are changing to bring whole-system safety to the fore



TAKING BACK CONTROL

Some products are made to be together. No question. And there can be a high price to pay when that doesn't happen. It's a lesson that's been brutally driven home across the construction industry in Dame Judith Hackitt's report on the Building Regulations following the fire at Grenfell Tower.

When a specialist contractor installs products and systems used for passive fire protection, they should be given a granular level of attention to ensure that they will comply.

However, even the most fire-resistant products – be they ceilings, doors, partitions or glass – are only as good as their installation and the way they are specified and put together with other products to create systems.



So why do bad installations occur? According to Joe Cilia, technical director at FIS, too often the problem is an assumption that it's OK to mix-and-match products on the assumption that they will perform together.

"Many believe that 'similar or approved' rules apply," he says. "But those two words are miles apart."

"The key words in any documentation should be 'equal and approved' – same system performance AND approved by the architect or designer who is responsible overall."

As Cilia points out, different products may be manufactured to a certain standard but perform in very different ways in the event of fire, which is why warranted or third-party systems are so relevant.

"Under Part B regulation 38 in the Building Regulations, installers are required to provide evidence of fire performance products," he says. "This usually includes evidence that they are compliant and correctly installed."

"With 'similar or approved', that's where the gaps start forming."

Stephen Bond, technical and customer support manager, fire protection, at glass manufacturer Pilkington UK agrees.

"You could have the best fire-resistant glass in the world, but if the frame, fixings or intumescent materials around the outside are incorrectly specified, then the whole system doesn't work," he says.

ACCREDITATION SCHEMES

Bond admits it's not possible for manufacturers and specifiers to test every single combination out there, which means they have to operate in third-party accredited schemes.

"For example, there are a number of specialist fire-resistant glazing seal manufacturers out there," he says, "but you must have a competent or, even better, a qualified person choosing the correct one to go round the outside according to the test or assessment data available."

"Recent events would suggest that this is not happening to the level we would like. We make all the information readily available, but maybe there's a lack of education out there."

In an effort to make things clearer around suspended ceilings, OWA (UK)

"A car has an MOT every year it's on the road, so why shouldn't a door have something similar?"

has rebranded, and in some cases re-tested, its products, says Andrew Smith, joint managing director, sales and marketing, and the current president of FIS.

"The brand names are now absolutely clear in terms of the application for which they are tested," he says – the company's products include Corridor Pro, Mezzanine Pro and Steel Pro.

Smith is also heartened by the increase in calls it now receives post-Grenfell from architects, installers and distributors, all anxious to know whether they are using the correct products or system.

It's a picture Robert Cridford, technical manager at drylining and partition supplier Etex, also recognises, with architects, specifiers and installers beginning to realise just how much they previously took for granted.

"We obviously can't control people or stop them from changing bits around on a partition system that's been approved and warranted by us, but we do what we can," he says.

What that involves, Cridford explains, is having a team of Etex people always ready to go to sites to offer training and advice; a technical advice line people can ring; a free training centre at its offices for merchants, contractors and subcontractors who want to learn more about its systems; and a soon-to-be-rolled-out site supervision course that will help people identify common faults on site.

"We've also got a comprehensive test programme for new systems and products, as well as for renewals and maintenance," he says.

In fact, maintenance is one of the biggest issues facing the passive fire protection market, according to Philip Duckworth, chairman of door manufacturer Forza. "Once these

products are installed, they must be maintained," he says, "and particularly doors with moving parts."

"I'd like to see this legislated on – a car has an MOT every year it's on the road, so why shouldn't a door have something similar?"

Duckworth applauds the Fire Door Inspection Scheme (www.fdis.co.uk), an initiative by the Guild of Architectural Ironmongers and the British Woodworking Federation. He says that some of Forza's in-house fitters have done the FDIS diploma and are now fire door inspectors.

The company has also engaged with its local fire service and given seminars to various stations. "They were really interested to find out what to look for in a correctly fitted fire door," he says, adding: "Perhaps the 'door MOT' could be promoted by the fire service."

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Pilkington UK's Bond also points to a recently revised version of a best practice guide for fire-resistant glazing ([download via bit.ly/2RhqYSY](https://bit.ly/2RhqYSY)), released by the Fire-Resistant Glazing Group (part of the Glass and Glazing Federation), which Bond chairs.

"We also started to initiate training in installing fire-resistant glazing a couple of years ago," he says. "We're trying to promote it again as there's definitely interest out there."

Bond hammers the point home again – central to any training should be the message that products must be part of a specified system.

"People need to start looking beyond the individual price of products to the whole cost of a system that works together. And procurement needs to get on board with this. We need to be reaching out to them and not just the installers," he says.

Etex's Cridford agrees. "These products are approved and warranted by the likes of us, but we develop and test the products as systems," he says.

"If specifiers, installers and contractors then start changing bits around without talking to us, it could turn into something that simply isn't up to the job."

The message is clear: if products are made to be together, then everyone in the sector must make sure that they stay together.

WELCOME TO

It may sound otherworldly to many in construction but, as **Chris Wheal** explains, this new record-keeping system promises to bring about much needed change in key areas such as payment and product tracking

You might have heard of Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies. A year ago, they were the get-rich-quick speculative assets that just a few months down the line helped investors get poor even quicker.

But behind the headline-grabbing currency trading is a new technology that's going to shake up even the most traditional of industries. It's called blockchain.

Let's quickly jargon-bust. Blockchain is a distributed ledger system. This means all records (think of an old-fashioned ledger book or a modern spreadsheet) are kept on many computers around the world, not one central mainframe.

A blockchain is a permanent set of records that cannot be corrupted, altered or deleted once agreed. Each new record is added but the old ones never removed, so there is an audit trail for each addition or amendment.

This means that everyone who has access to these records sees the identical information. So you can never be using out of date drawings or specifications, for example, or secretly changing them to your advantage. If you did, you'd get caught.

The data can be input in a variety of ways. For example, a product could have a chip in it or a code that's automatically read when the product is loaded, distributed and delivered, ensuring probity in the supply chain.

Companies such as shopping giant Walmart and shipping firm Maersk are ahead of the game on this with supply chain blockchain, but it will come to construction too.



The clever bit comes with smart contracts, which some, but not all, blockchains allow. These are automated contracts using data fed directly into the blockchain. Once the data matches the terms of the contracts, the next stage is triggered, including payment. The smart contracts can cover everything from asset-checking to complex procurement.

There are some other terms you might hear too. Forget Bitcoin – that's really only for financial transactions. Ethereum is an important blockchain as it was the first to permit smart contracts, and the latest, faster blockchain is called EOS.

There are several blockchains aimed at business users – Corda, developed by a company called R3, and Hyperledger, developed by the Linux foundation and used by the likes of IBM. And there are public and private blockchains, though businesses tend to use private ones.

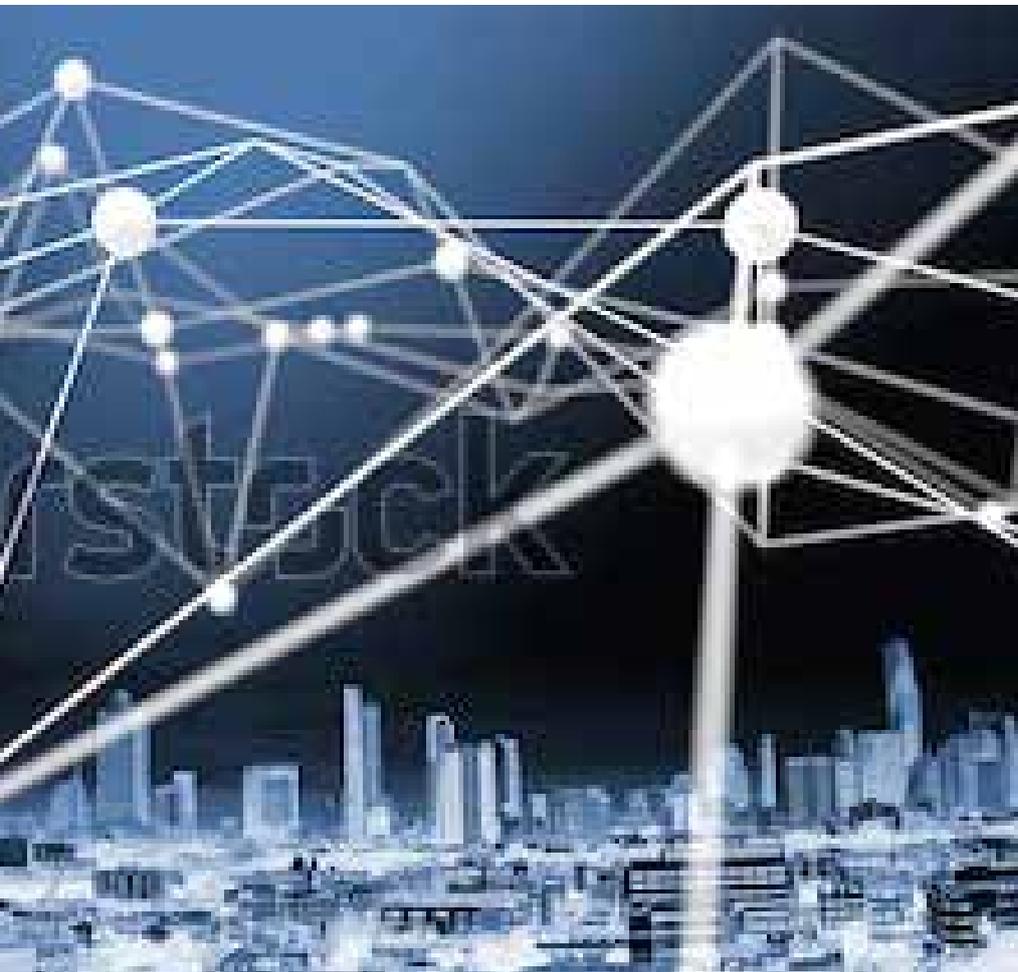
If you'd never heard of blockchain before, you

are not alone. A search of the Construction Leadership Council's website draws a blank and it is not mentioned once in the government's *Construction Sector Deal*, published in July.

But dig a little deeper and the leading minds in construction say blockchain is coming. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) brought out its first report on the potential for blockchain in January. It's called *Blockchain – feasibility and opportunity assessment*.

Shamir Ghumra, BREEAM director at BRE, says that while nothing has yet been adopted to scale, there's huge scope for the technology to change the sector. "There are a number of potential applications of blockchain technology in the construction industry, from the validation of maintenance to the provenance of materials," he says. "The process of payment could be an area that's ready for this type of technology, allowing SMEs to get paid more quickly once the work's been signed off."

BLOCKCHAIN



“The benefits of blockchain could be gigantic. There will be savings in materials and in architect and design fees”

There is also a Construction Blockchain Consortium (CBC), led by Abel Maciel, an architect by training and principal at BIM firm Design Computation.

“The benefits of blockchain could be gigantic. There could be huge time and money savings and significant risk reductions while increasing quality,” he says. “I expect waste to drop significantly. There will be savings in materials and in architect and design fees.”

Maciel’s focus is on developing smart contracts that won’t just automate the process but which will be “transforming and de-risking the process”, he says.

Payments will be speeded up because they will be automated – no more sitting on an invoice for months on end. “If you buy paint and

that paint is delivered on site, you pay for it. The smart contract initiates the payment automatically,” he says.

CBC is currently using Corda, Hyperledger and Ethereum, but is watching the recently launched EOS as a potential too.

Amelia Burnett is head of engagement at the Centre for Digital Built Britain (CDBB), part of the University of Cambridge, where Dr Veronica Martinez and Professor Andy Neely are working with Cemex, Caterpillar and the Cambridge Service Alliance to test blockchains in different parts of the supply chain.

Burnett tells *FIS Focus* the early results from the prototypes are positive in terms of time, cost and customer satisfaction. Neely and Martinez have also produced a model to guide

organisations through the implementation, which will be published soon.

“We believe blockchain could support and strengthen BIM, particularly for managing access to sensitive or classified materials/spaces in buildings, such as in the oil and gas sector or nuclear energy plants,” says Burnett.

“Because data on the blockchain is shared across all users, it also has the potential to benefit collaboration between stakeholders in building projects, because there is a single source of truth.”

AHEAD OF THE GAME

One firm that’s ahead of the game is French firm BimChain, whose founder and CEO, Arnaud Gueguen, has a background as an architect and BIM manager.

His idea is to enable BIM to use blockchain to accurately store and report the progress of construction projects, matching contracts, products and processes to the design and specification.

Importantly, Gueguen says, the system also manages liability for each stage in the process and provides records of who was responsible for what. It integrates with all the major design programmes and related BIM software and will help the BIM process go paperless.

The system will build in smart contracts (currently using a private Ethereum blockchain, though Gueguen too is looking into EOS) creating “faster, more frequent payments” as each stage in the construction process is completed and verified.

Gueguen says payments every two weeks could be the incentive subcontractors need to adopt BIM in earnest.

However, there are cautioning voices. Sam Stacey is challenge director – transforming construction at UK Research and Innovation, the national funding agency investing in science and research. He is involved in the £170m government-backed Transforming Construction challenge, which is linked to the Construction Sector Deal.

“Construction lags behind other sectors in terms of technology adoption – that is well-established and documented,” he says. “The construction industry is not a great place to experiment. We need something that is absolutely safe.

“I’d say it’s a watching brief. I would encourage piloting and trials of blockchain, and I can see that blockchain and BIM could go hand in hand, but my thought is that we should start with shadowing projects and compare and contrast the results.”

THE FUTURES LOOKS BRIGHT

The first wave of FIS's apprenticeship programme is well under way, promising a more collaborative and innovative approach to training right down the supply chain with Stortford Interiors and Project Futures. **Victoria Madine** finds out more

It's two months since John Taylor joined Stortford Interiors as an apprentice carpenter and he's full of enthusiasm for a career in interiors: "I never imagined there were so many opportunities in this sector," he says. "It's the new start I needed."

John (see box, facing page) is one of 10 apprentices who started with the Hertfordshire-based company in September as part of a new training programme called Project Futures.

A joint collaboration between FIS and Stortford, the initiative will see the interiors company recruiting and training a total of 30 apprentices in drylining and carpentry over the next three years.

This represents the firm's first foray into recruiting apprentices, with an investment of around £700,000 by the £45m turnover company.

But the scope of this approach extends well beyond Stortford Interiors. The goal of the programme, and the reason FIS has been instrumental in setting it up, is to create a template for recruiting and training apprentices that other companies in the sector can adopt.

Project Futures is part of FIS's wider campaign to simplify apprenticeships for both employers and recruits. Using the work with Stortford, it wants to understand the barriers, and smooth out the issues, to develop the best process for FIS members to see apprenticeships as a way forward. The wider intention is also to assist in driving the strategic goal of attracting 1,500 new entrants into the sector per annum by 2020.

So why is FIS making such a concerted effort to address training needs? And what makes this approach so special?

THE SKILLS GAP

It's no secret that the construction industry, and by extension the finishes and interiors sector, is facing a skills shortage, but the scale of the issue is reaching crisis point.

Construction's workforce is ageing, and the rate of retirement is set to increase – 22% of workers are over 50 and 15% are in their 60s. That means almost one in five construction workers are set to retire over the next five to 10 years (according to CITB figures).

This trend comes on top of a reduced pool of workers. Over 140,000 jobs were shed by the industry in the 2008 recession and there were job losses in the 2012 dip.





APPRENTICE VIEW: JOHN TAYLOR

Switching to a career in the finishes and interiors sector was not a decision that John Taylor took lightly. Feeling burnt out after regularly working 80-hour weeks as a chef for more than five years, the 23-year-old from Hornchurch in Essex carefully researched a job that could offer creative fulfilment as well as a living wage.

John toyed with the idea of carpentry and it wasn't long before his research led him to CITB and information about apprenticeships. But it was an online job search engine that flagged up Stortford Interiors' Project Futures apprenticeship scheme.

"I read about the scheme and straight away I got the sense that the scheme looked well structured. This contrasted with other apprenticeships I'd read about that just looked flimsy – like you'd end up making cups of tea all day," he says. "All the info I needed was right there, including details about wages. I could see that this was an opportunity I could afford to take."

John was given further information about the job by FIS and attended an interview with Stortford Interiors. He was subsequently offered a place to train with the company for a City & Guilds Level 2 diploma in site carpentry, starting in September 2018.

Currently on site with Project Eros, an office development for CBRE in Southwark Street, London, John says he went into the industry 'blind' with little knowledge before he started his own research about the opportunities available.

"This scheme has given me a sense that I am valued, as well as giving me the practical stuff such as the tools I need."

John adds: "Not enough people know that job opportunities like this exist in construction."



Above: Project Futures first wave (seated l-r) Nicholas Tamakle, Keenan Glover, (standing l-r) Archie Swain, Nick Willis, George Winchole, FIS president Andrew Smith, Sam Brown, Joseph Adetoro, FIS Skills manager Amanda Scott, John Taylor, Nathan Frames, Stortford Interiors CEO Jim Nania, Siyani Alert

These losses have not been recouped and fears are growing among some employers that Brexit could lead to a further drop in labour supply if immigrant labourers from the EU head home.

With the economy relatively buoyant and demand for construction strong, CITB has forecast that more than 150,000 construction jobs will be created over the next five years, with over 15,000 carpenters needed alone.

Echoing the CITB findings, the Chartered Institute of

Building (CIOB) has said that the construction industry will need to find 157,000 new recruits by 2021 if it is to keep up with demand.

Aside from the industry's own attempts to address this challenge, the government has responded to the problem of skills gaps across all industries by committing to an additional three million apprenticeship starts in Britain by 2020. These are being funded by the Apprenticeship Levy, which was introduced in April 2017 (see box overleaf).

However, as an article in June's *FIS Focus* explored, apprenticeship starts in construction decreased in 2017 with many employers uncertain about how to access the training vouchers provided through the levy.

And that confusion remains. A survey carried out by FIS this summer found that only 23.8% of its members had accessed and utilised the levy, while 71.4% of members were not confident they understood it.

COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

This is part of an overarching FIS response to helping members navigate the Apprenticeship Levy and CITB Levy and overcome any other potential areas of confusion or uncertainty regarding apprenticeships, so that members feel able to commit to recruiting apprentices.

As FIS president Andrew Smith explains: "We have decided to take responsibility for the training needs of our sector, and supporting Stortford's Project Futures is a part of this commitment."

By working with Stortford Interiors to set up the Project Futures apprenticeship programme, FIS has developed the administrative processes, and developed clear knowledge around how to access training grants, to enable and encourage other FIS members to follow suit.

The initiative has been developed with the support of other industry bodies, including the Construction Industry Council and CITB. Amanda Scott, FIS sector skills engagement manager, says the association is fully equipped to hand hold any of its members through the process. "We now have all the tools in place to help companies access

APPRENTICE TRAILBLAZERS

Trailblazer Standards are enabling employers to be instrumental in writing the requirements for all future apprentices and are gradually replacing the frameworks currently in place.

Apprentices can be started on a framework and transferred to the new standard once it becomes published, ensuring continuity for employers.

Trailblazers focus on providing endpoint assessments defined by employers to ensure that all apprentices give clear evidence they have learnt the skills required to do the job before they complete their apprenticeship.

Initiated in 2016, FIS is working with the Institute for Apprenticeships, CITB and key employers to develop the new standard for interior systems apprenticeships. This is currently going through the endpoint assessment planning stage and will be submitted into the next development phase in January, with the aim of making it available for delivery from April 2019.

The plastering trailblazer is being revised and is likely to be published and available to employers for delivery in similar timescales.

Carpentry and joinery standards are published and available for use.

Apprenticeship Levy vouchers and other training grants," she says. "From sorting college placements to mentoring, we can assist FIS members with every single aspect of creating a successful apprenticeship programme."

For Maria Coulter, construction coach and non-executive director for the CIC, the strength of the model is that it should help smaller companies to gain access to training.

"The biggest challenge for SMEs in the sector when it comes to training is the time it takes to set up a scheme and run it – as well as understanding the grants that might be accessed," she says. "FIS has shown that it is switched on to its members' needs by offering to help ease this burden."

HOW THE SCHEME WORKS

Scott's first move with Stortford Interiors was to consider the business case of recruiting apprentices in the first place.

She explains: "We took a careful look at Stortford Interiors to understand the business and its work pipeline over the next few years. It was clear that many of the projects involved working with a Tier 1 contractor where there were Section 106 planning obligations – in other words, a requirement to benefit the local labour market and economy by raising skills."

Scott continues: "Recruiting apprentices would enable Stortford Interiors to help satisfy the requirements of these projects, benefiting not only the client and contractors but also, ultimately, provide the company with its next generation of future talent."

Stortford director of operations Paul Leach says it was this need to secure talent that was the key driver for investing in an apprenticeship programme.

"We wanted to recognise that there is a skills shortage in the sector," he says. "Our aim is to improve the quality of our workforce and move towards a workforce that's wholly trade-specific rather the green card-carrying general operatives."

With the support of FIS, Stortford Interiors coordinated with its key clients, including British Land, Sir Robert McAlpine and Laing O'Rourke, to understand their contract and project needs from a skills and recruitment perspective.

Stortford then approached its own supply chain – its preferred subcontractors – to organise how the apprentices would be trained on the job with their support, in addition to apprentices' days spent in college.



It was made clear to Stortford Interiors' site-based subcontractors that for the first 18 months of the apprenticeship programme, they would have the benefit of the apprentices' work, with none of the costs except the time required to train them. After this period, the firm would ask for a 25% contribution towards the apprenticeship costs.

Stortford appointed an in-house mentor to oversee the programme, coordinating the apprentices' schedule and acting as a point of contact for both the apprentices and subcontractors involved.

Leach says the key driver of Project Futures' success is that each group involved has an incentive to work within the programme, from the apprentice through to the developer, or site owner.

"We're paying a living wage to the young people coming on board," he says. "Our contractors are benefiting from low-cost labour while our clients further up the chain are able to meet their contract obligations and wider corporate social responsibility targets."

THE CONTRACTOR VIEW

Stortford Interiors' clients certainly welcome the Project Futures initiative. The company is working on British Land's mixed-use developments at Broadgate, London, with a 10-year pipeline of construction work. Since 2014, British Land has set out a requirement for suppliers to ensure that 3% of the workforce on its site are apprentices.

Project Futures is helping the project team at Broadgate, which is led by Tier 1 contractor Sir Robert McAlpine, towards this contract requirement.

But Karina Williams, sustainability manager at British Land, is keen to point out that this target is far more than a box-ticking exercise. "We're serious about building a skilled workforce for the UK. Our sites are already seeing the effects of the skills gap and it's in the whole industry's interest to address it."

Liz Waters, stakeholder communications and community manager at Sir Robert McAlpine, is an enthusiastic supporter of apprenticeship schemes such as Project Futures, which provide a platform for a collaborative response to the skills shortage.

"The industry is in a transitional time, with the recent introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy, and it is good to see a scheme launch to full fruition in an arena perhaps not as easily set up as should be."



The site of the first Project Futures apprentice programme is at British Land's office-led redevelopment at Broadgate, opposite London's Liverpool Street station, which is due to open next year

Stortford Interiors is working with Laing O'Rourke on the redevelopment of The Post Building in London's Holborn district. Sophie Boyle, sustainability officer at the main contractor, is adamant that the social value created by schemes such as Project Futures is no longer a bolt-on for projects; clients expect to see initiatives like this as a matter of course.

"The days are gone where a programme like Project Futures would be a 'nice to have'," she says. "Targets for employment and training opportunities put requirements on the whole supply chain to create these opportunities because they are so important."

"A scheme like Project Futures means that everyone is happy – from the developer and main contractors, through to Stortford Interiors and the young people who are being offered new training opportunities."

ATTRACTING NEW RECRUITS

Despite the financial rewards of a career in construction, it is still viewed by many young people as a fall-back decision. CITB data shows that the appeal of construction as a career option is low, scoring 4.2 out of 10 among 14- to 19-year-olds.

The perception is that construction jobs are about 'being outdoors and getting dirty' and suited to those 'who do not get into college or university'. It is telling that only 40 people applied for the 10 available apprenticeship positions with Stortford Interiors.

However, there is a consensus right through the supply chain that properly structured, properly paid apprenticeship schemes are a vital part of the solution when it comes to encouraging young people like John Taylor to consider a career in construction.

The hope is that programmes such as Project Futures will, in time, change young people's perception of the industry.

As Karina Williams of British Land says: "We have to raise the image of the construction industry in the minds of young people and provide a clear route to training in the industry for school leavers."

"Project Futures is a pioneering initiative in as much as it is a contractor-led programme providing youngsters with a clear and structured apprenticeship with a living wage."

"We'd love to see other companies take the same sort of initiative and we can only hope that others will feel inspired to do likewise."

APPRENTICESHIP LEVY

Introduced on 6 April 2017, the Apprenticeship Levy is set at 0.5% of an employer's wage bill and applies to companies with an annual pay roll of £3m or more (less than 2% of all UK employers).

Levy contributions are paid into an employer's digital apprenticeship account, with the government adding a top-up of 10% – or 10p for every £1 that gets paid in.

Firms with fewer than 50 employees pay nothing towards the costs of training an apprentice, while those

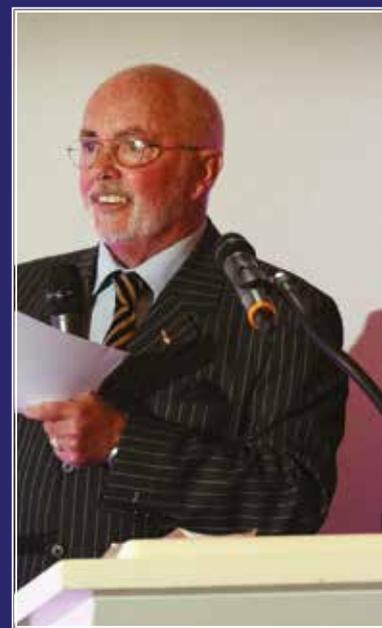
with over 50 employees (but not eligible to pay the levy) contribute 10% of the costs.

CITB already collects a levy from construction employers with a wage bill of £80,000 or more, with the funds collected invested back into the industry for training.

This overlap between the two levies has prompted training board to set up a new employer-led Levy Working Party to consider the options for how the CITB levy can work alongside the apprenticeship levy.

FIS

SCOTTISH AWARDS 2018



CHAMPIONING EXCELLENCE

In his address to guests at this year's Scottish Awards Lunch, FIS president Andrew Smith called on the sector to come together, meet clients and suppliers, and learn from others.

He gave an update on the key strategic developments taking place at FIS. "Our current strategy is focused on technical leadership, skills and community. Our technical projects and initiatives are many, but the issue of the day, the year and possibly this generation is fire safety. A cultural change is coming and FIS supports the raising of standards, ensuring that fire-safe products are selected, that their performance and quality are traceable and that the correct systems are installed.

"I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with the author of the report into Grenfell, Dame Judith Hackitt, and her view and drive is to use this opportunity to transform construction practice. In Scotland especially, it is evident to me that many already accept and embrace this responsibility. Specifications tend to be more carefully crafted and adhered to than in some areas of the UK. But there is a lot more to be achieved to make sure we deliver safe buildings.

"The tragedy at Glasgow School of Art, and other failures, provide us with lessons from which to learn. Arson in schools is at epidemic proportions, with one in 20 having a fire each year and 60% as a result of arson. Schools are a special case, and an extra level of fire protection is called for."

Smith continued: "Our decision to invest in the FIS skills team has reaped huge rewards, with substantial funding from CITB to enable better use of your money – an achievement that is the

envy of many other trade bodies. Three weeks ago I attended an event, supported by FIS, where a large fit-out contractor celebrated the appointment of 10 new apprentices. It was an investment in the youth of their community, motivated by the chronic skills shortage and by the requirement of some local authorities for main contractors to show they have a proportion of local apprentices on their sites.

"Our third strategic aim is the creation of community events and initiatives that bring our sector together. Standing here today represents a wonderful moment. Since 1990, I have supported and been involved in FIS and its founding organisations, so coming to this event is an honour. Thank you for your support for FIS – a dynamic organisation with a committed and professional staff, a supportive and guiding board and a broad membership. This is where quality comes together.

"We are delighted to support our community here in Scotland. We applaud and raise a glass to your work, we thank you for championing excellence in the finishes and interiors sector and we wish you the best of luck now and in future."

FIS chief executive Iain McIlwee, whose appearance at the Scottish Awards marked his first event in the new role, added: "Awards are about so much more than slapping each other on the back. They are about recognising excellence and ensuring the finishes and interiors sector is recognised for its outstanding contribution to UK construction. What a way to be introduced to the sector – I am proud, humbled and excited all at the same time. What an amazing industry to be part of!"

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This year's FIS Scottish Awards Lunch, on 28 September at the Trades Hall of Glasgow, showcased the winners of eight categories. Local professional football pundit Charles 'Chick' Young entertained the 160-plus attendees and presented the awards



Save the date!
Next year's FIS Scottish Awards Lunch will be held on 27 September 2019 in Edinburgh



THE JUDGES

Phil Taylor and David Matthews



CATEGORY INFORMATION

Introduced in 2015, FIS's Scottish Awards aim to demonstrate the quality of work and wide range of projects across Scotland. This year's awards included:

- Interior Fit Out
- Partial Fit Out
- Drywall Construction
- Plasterwork
- Suspended Ceilings
- Partitioning
- Judges Award
- Apprentice of the Year



GOLD **VEITCHI INTERIORS**

Anderson High School and halls of residence, Shetland Isles
Architect: Ryder Architecture

Veitchi Interiors was appointed to install all the internal partitions, wall linings, acoustic wall panels and suspended ceilings within the new £42m, four-storey Anderson High School. The firm also supplied and installed more than 700 timber door sets, acoustic/fire-rated timber-glazed screens and joinery

finishings, such as atrium seating, stage, skirtings, cills and pelmets. A similar workscope was delivered within the adjacent halls of residence project – which progressed simultaneously – providing 80 en-suite rooms with all common area facilities.

All products were delivered by boat from Aberdeen 12 hours away, which meant that all measurements, surveys and quantities had to be spot on.

“The works have been completed to an exceptionally high standard and reflect a huge degree of collaboration with all other trades,” said the judges. “Overall, an excellent project.”



SILVER **SCOTWOOD INTERIORS**

LifeArc, Edinburgh
Architect: Form Design

For this second-floor fit-out, Scotwood created laboratory areas, a comms room, open-plan areas, breakout areas and meeting room suites. The works involved the installation of raised access flooring, a mixture of plasterboard and metal ceilings, glazed screens, floor coverings, bespoke joinery, M&E and furniture installation.

The judges agreed: “The fit-out works for this high-quality office space and laboratory all blended effortlessly into the whole interior design concept. All work has been completed to an exceptionally high standard.”



HIGHLY COMMENDED **WORKSMART CONTRACTS**

Ayrshire College Ayr Campus 2nd floor,
including Inver Restaurant, Ayrshire
Architect: LMA Architects

The full refurbishment of the college’s second floor in the summer break included demolition, reconfiguration and then installation of partitions, ceilings, floors, furniture, carpets decoration and electrics. It created classrooms, corridors, staff areas and office space, as well as the Inver Restaurant for hotel, leisure and hospitality students, which opens to the public in the evening. The £400,000 project was carried out in less than seven weeks. “It’s a credit to Worksmart to have completed the work in such a short period,” said the judges.



GOLD **LINEAR PROJECTS**

Macallan Distillery and Visitor Centre, Craigellachie
Architect: Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners

Set close to the River Spey on the Scottish Whisky Trail, the new Macallan Distillery reveals the production processes and welcomes visitors while remaining sensitive to the countryside. The 14,800m² floor plate is contained under an undulating grass-covered roof manufactured off-site.

During the eight-month fit-out, Linear helped deliver multiple packages: curved GRG walls to the staircase with a Macallan Gold Armourcoat polished plaster finish, SAS black curved bulkheads, Barrisol stretch ceilings, BCL solid timber ceilings, SAS 150 ceilings, drylining, MF ceilings, plaster skim, Kvardrat hinge-down fabric acoustic panels, glazed Planet acoustic partitions, bespoke doors, vanity units and kitchens.

"Numerous high-end ceilings, GRG drylinings and partition finishes were completed to a very high standard," agreed the



judges. "The curved walls to the drum feature, finished in Macallan Gold plaster, and the timber slatted ceilings are a really nice feature on entering the building. A pleasure to walk through."



SILVER **BRIAN HENDRY INTERIORS** **Holy Trinity Primary School, Glasgow** **Architect: Norr Architects**

This £8.7m primary school project for East Dunbartonshire Council was constructed on one level and comprised 12 open classrooms, each with a breakout area, as well as multi-purpose halls, dining areas and teacher support offices. The scope of works included drylining, suspended ceilings, joinery, glazed demountable partitions and acoustic wall panelling.

A main feature of the new school are three unusually shaped learning hubs – bespoke 'dens' built in timber and plasterboard, with manufactured shelving and seating, for an alternative learning space.

The judges were full of praise: "The colours and space used are impressive, creating a great place for learning. Overall, a high-quality installation."



GOLD

BRIAN HENDRY INTERIORS

Holy Trinity Primary School, Glasgow

Architect: Norr Architects

Brian Hendry Interiors worked with Morgan Sindall on this new 2,259m² facility, built on the existing St Flannan's School site

and sister school St Agatha's. The drylining package helped create three bright, unusually shaped spaces in timber and plasterboard, offering a colourful alternative style of learning.

The judges commented: "The linings to the external walls were integrated with high-level windows set back to form features with sloping cills. Overall, this is a high-quality installation with excellent finishes throughout."



GOLD

RYEDALE INTERIORS

SOAR at the Intu Centre, Braehead

Architect: CD Architects

Intu Braehead is Scotland's largest retail and leisure complex, with the UK's longest indoor real snow ski slope. The project involved the design, development, manufacture and site installation of the GRG cast plaster 'space trees' in the circulation areas. The works, in the ground floor public spaces, comprised

GRG space trees, tapered column casings and circular column casings. In total Ryedale manufactured and installed 575m² of moulded GRG plaster casts and supporting framework.

"A very impressive GRG installation," agreed the judges. "The overall effect has given visitors an atmospheric walkthrough, with trees painted white below a blackened sky, with the constellations and stars highlighted above."

Offsite works were cast at Ryedale's Leeds facility, delivered to site and assembled using a metal framed background support. A monolithic finish was applied to give "a really impressive look".

GOLD

BRIAN HENDRY INTERIORS

Hawkhead Care Home and Day

Care Centre, Renfrewshire

Architects: Unum Partnership,

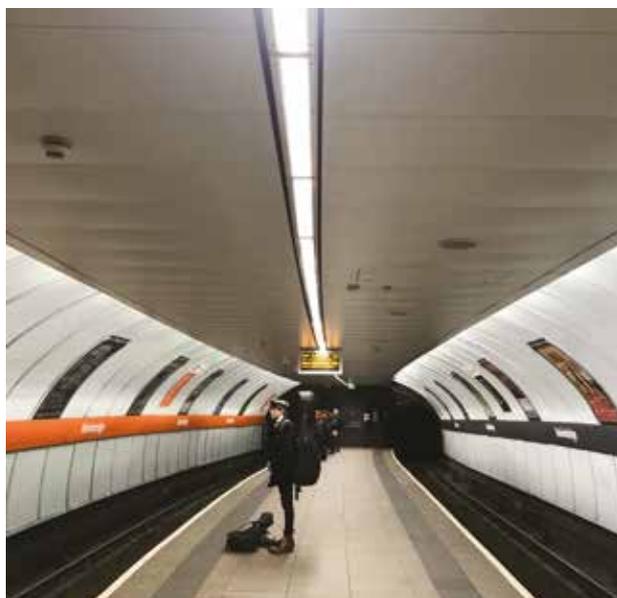
Page\Park

Brian Hendry Interiors worked with CCG (Scotland) on the purpose-built day care centre and care home for Scottish War Blind and its sister charity, the Royal Blind. The £5.5m day care centre, constructed on one level, was designed by Page\Park Architects, and the £12.5m two-storey care home by Unum.

The day care centre has a bespoke ceiling comprising 1,500m² of birch-faced plywood planks, installed to a 150m radius following the curve of the steel roof. The installation used Armstrong World Industries' DGS faceted framework system. Acoustic insulation was installed above the planks, hidden by a black acoustic fabric to enhance the end finish.

The curved wood ceiling planks – hailed by the judges as “striking” – were installed internally, externally and on some vertical walls, to present a flowing appearance of the timber planks running through the external glazing. Brian Hendry Interiors also supplied and installed a variety of standard Armstrong modular exposed lay-in ceilings in the care home, including Perla, Dune Max and Ultima ceiling tiles, covering more than 1600m².

The judges agreed: “An excellent project that showcases high-quality workmanship and precise attention to every detail.”



SILVER

CARTER CEILINGS

Kelvinbridge Subway Station, Glasgow

Architect: Austin-Smith:Lord

Carter Ceilings has so far been responsible for 10 of the 11 projects in the modernisation of the 120-year-old Glasgow subway network. These works – to install SAS ceiling products within a live subway environment – specified SAS System 150 to the concourse and SAS System 200 to the platform.

The platform ceiling followed the curve of the track, so the ceiling panels and bespoke access hatches were manufactured in a trapezoidal formation. A radius wing lighting detail was installed to conceal the light fitting to the two outer edges of the platform. On the platform, the ceiling system was installed with C Clamps, bolts and washers to the existing steel, with security clips to handle the wind loads generated by moving trains.

“The pre-formed metal bulkhead used on both sides of the ceiling system gave sharp, impressive lines,” said the judges. “All works had to be completed at night, with limited working hours.”

GOLD
WORKSMART CONTRACTS
Edrington Group head
office, Glasgow
Architect: Form Design

Worksmart worked in conjunction with the Form Design team to select glazed screens that would complement this high-end fit-out in Glasgow for whisky producer the Edrington Group.

Worksmart opted for a Sektor system with cross-glazing, double-glazed doors using the photo door system and a fire-rated glazed screen, incorporating bronze ironmongery specified by the designer.

“The visual finish of the project is stunning, with lots of quirky features,” enthused the judges, adding: “The project carried the usual logistical problems – this was a major city centre fit-out – but all aspects of Worksmart’s installation is second to none.”



SILVER
PLANET PARTITIONING
Cirrus Logic, Edinburgh
Architect: Michael Laird Architects

Planet installed bespoke glazed partitions over four floors for audio company Cirrus Logic in this newly regenerated space.

The office space not only included meeting rooms, open-plan space and breakout areas, but also ‘jam’ rooms and recording studios. This called for stringent acoustic attenuation, with

p100DG glazed partitioning screens and SonoTec doors used throughout the office and meeting areas, and p100SG in the breakout spaces. For the music rooms, Planet recommended p200 triple-glazed screens so workers wouldn’t be disturbed. Tech panels were integrated to the partitioning screens round the meeting rooms, so they can be booked remotely. Planet also designed a zig-zag glazed screen along the front of some offices.

The judges were wowed: “Planet’s zig-zag partition screen has a striking effect. The overall project has a very high-tech feeling, and Planet’s glazed screens blend in perfectly.”

GOLD

VEITCHI INTERIORS

Kelvinhaugh Street student accommodation, Glasgow
Architect: ICA

Veitchi was employed to design and build this six-storey, 420-bedroom student accommodation block using a Metframe system. All the Metsec products were delivered direct to Veitchi's factory and assembled into panels to be delivered to site for installation.

Veitchi provided technical advice and a cost plan for the structure and developed the frame to meet the client's needs.

The firm also designed, supplied and installed a light gauge steel frame from first-floor transfer structure up to structural roof level.

The Metframe comprised 100mm load-bearing stud walls and 160mm deep concrete intermediate floor slab. Steel stair units were installed as the 15-week project progressed, providing a safe means of access during the works.

The judges said: "This is a fantastic method of construction, which improves quality and installation time. The close-knit integration between the Metsec design team, Veitchi design team and the installation guys on site was paramount in seeing this project through to a successful conclusion. The completed building looks fantastic."



SILVER

CLANSMAN INTERIORS

Prestwick Airport toilet refurbishment, Ayrshire
Architect: Halcion

The project involved the demolition of a 1960s toilet block, including baby change area, cleaners' cupboards and offices, to create larger toilet facilities for Glasgow Prestwick Airport. The

work, carried out in a busy airport terminal, involved working both landside and airside. Construction of new walls and structural ceilings took place, followed by installation of ceramic flooring and wall tiles to the whole area using epoxy grout and adhesive. A pre-plumbed Venesta Vepps system was installed, along with laminate cubicles and trough-style basins with automatic sensor taps and soap dispensers. The judges declared: "The overall finishes to the job were excellent."



FIS sector skills
engagement manager
Amanda Scott presents the
award to Robbie



ROBBIE SPROUL
Apprentice ceiling fixer,
Brian Hendry Interiors

From more than 40 applicants, Robbie's CV stood out in two areas – work experience and his further education on a construction-related course. He had held various part-time jobs from the age of 13 and, at the time of his application, was working full-time with a roofing company. He had attained his CSCS card at 16 as part of a school work placement with a local main contractor.

Robbie's weekly apprentice report card included comments such as: "Robbie showed great initiative and takes the lead among the other boys to start tasks and is always keen to get on the tools" and "Robbie erected his first ceiling under supervision; I just answered his questions and he did the work".

CITB-appointed teacher Paul Steel commented: "Robbie is a very hard worker and keen to learn his trade and become a first class ceiling fixer. Both in class and out in the rigs working, Robbie is always working hard, is a good influence on the other boys and should be a credit to Brian Hendry Interiors.

Apprenticeship officer Margaret Key agreed: "Robbie is a quiet young man who, when in college, keeps his head down and concentrates fully on the task in hand."

Robbie has been working on a variety of projects and

with a cross-section of tradesmen and site supervisors, all of whom have said he is making excellent progress. On one project, the main contractor was strict about health and safety and insisted on being shown proof that a Young Person's Risk Assessment had been carried out for Robbie. Robbie promptly produced from his tool bag a copy of it and confidently answered various health and safety questions.

Brian Hendry is in no doubt about Robbie's positive qualities, listing them enthusiastically: "His smile and positive outlook, he is instantly likeable, his confidence in his own abilities and what he wants to be, enthusiasm to work, good manners and a contagious work ethic."

Robbie's work ethic is described as "exemplary" – he has full attendance at work and is regularly on site at 7.12, ready for a 7.30 start.

Managing director Brian Hendry said he had no hesitation in nominating Robbie: "Over the years, achieving a trade in construction has increasingly been frowned upon. We need enthusiastic and confident young people like Robbie being put forward and endorsed by our industry to show our country that a career in construction is a fantastic opportunity."

Creating an office fit-out can be daunting for your clients. The project has to suit their business, customers and staff – and has to happen on time, to specification and to budget.

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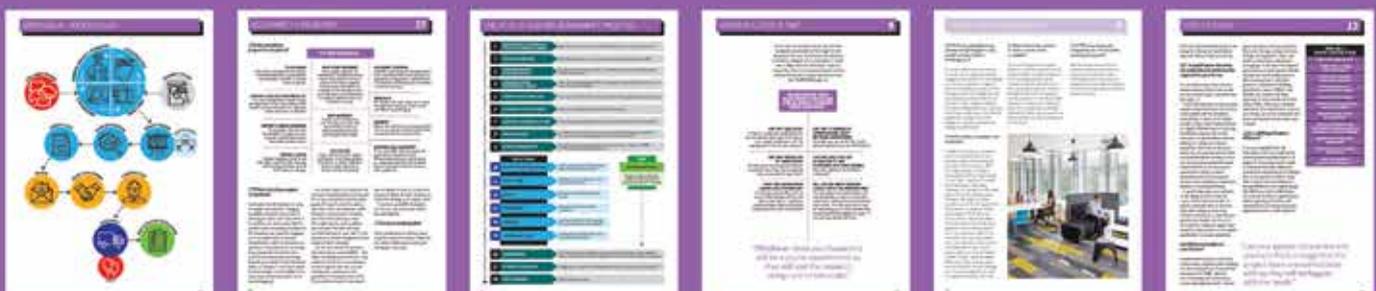
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DEVELOPING SECTOR SKILLS



FIS speaks with one strong voice for the finishes and interiors sector. We are working collectively to achieve our objectives through a strategy for a better future for the sector, its companies and individuals.

DRIVING TECHNICAL COMPETENCE



Our aim is to equip members to meet client needs more effectively, to ensure we have enough skilled people working to high technical standards, and to embed a culture of quality and sustainable development.

BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY



Our strategy has six pillars: skills; technical competence; community; health and safety; sustainability; industry development. By focusing on these we can help create a stronger, safer, and more profitable sector.

PROUD OF OUR SECTOR? TOGETHER WE WILL BE EVEN STRONGER. WHY NOT JOIN US?