

SPEC FINISH

FIS

The magazine of FIS
representing the finishes
and interiors sector

www.thefis.org



REFRAMING FIT-OUT AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “RESPONSIBLE NO”

Sustainability:

CAT A research aiming to unify the market

Feature:

Looking ahead: A promise of investment and growth; however, challenges remain

Design:

Enhancing learning environments: The importance of acoustic solutions

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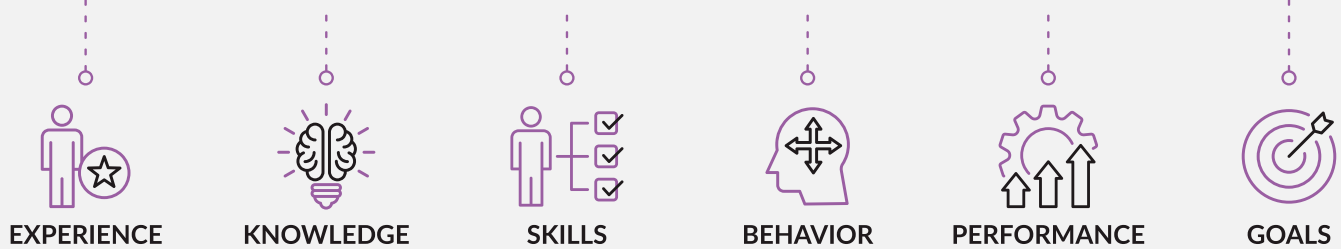


Build on us.

MISSION: SURVIVE TO 2025 – COMPLETED IT!

Following a challenging 2024, if you want to thrive in 2025, prioritising the demonstration of competence will be key.

COMPETENCE



IAIN MCILWEE
Chief Executive,
Finishes and
Interiors Sector



Someone said to me early last year that their only ambition for 2024 was to survive to 2025. I get it. Candidly, if I were asked to relive any year of my professional life, 2024 would not be it (to be honest, I'm pretty sure none of the 2020s would make the cut!). The populist posturing that typified the UK and US elections, combined with wider global uncertainty and the lack of clarity in new regulations all hindered investment in construction. Against this backdrop, insolvencies were high, procurement was aggressive, and the market was tough for most. Many of us careered into Christmas wondering where the year had gone, but if you're reading this, we made it—top job!

Now, 2025 opens up before us, and we go again. While the jury is still out on how quickly the market will recover, the regulatory mists are beginning to clear. The watchword for 2025 is **competency**.

Requirements for individual competence and organisational capability are enshrined in the Building Regulations. In early December, a HUGE cross-industry effort to define and support these emerged from the shadows. The Industry Competency Steering Group (ICSG) published details on how individual

competence has been defined in standard SKEB (Skills, Knowledge, Experience, and Behaviours) Statements that cover most core functions. They also unveiled further plans to refine and develop the framework for its implementation. It will now be up to individual employers to demonstrate how their workforce can evidence competence against these standards.

Remember, under the same regulatory reforms, clients are required to conduct their due diligence and ensure that "reasonable time and resources" have been committed. As a result, you will begin to see more requests from clients and through Building Control for Competence Declarations. Capturing details of qualifications, completed training, portfolios, and evidence of delivery will become essential. While this transition may add some bureaucratic burden to businesses already pressed for time, I remain convinced that it is a change for the better. Beyond helping to improve quality across the sector and ensuring a level playing field, if we want to present professionalism and encourage people into careers in our sector, it's crucial to have clear professional standards that are respected and adhered to.

FIS has been immersed in this work, and the Competency section in the Skills Hub¹ on our website reflects this. If you need assistance, just let us know—our team is ready, willing, and able to help identify the right standards, locate training, and source funding. We have also worked on a digital system, the FIS Professional Passports, to help digitalise some of the processes.

Organisational Capability also presents a huge opportunity to start to define better who is responsible for what in the process and differentiate the professional businesses. Those businesses that can evidence that they have competent people deployed through clear, effective process control and can evidence the same should finally benefit. Finally, the cream should start to rise to the top.

Most businesses FIS encounters in our sector through our vetting are already doing much of this. Some may simply need to document it better now, or even consider certifying core processes. However, an improved focus on operational excellence will bring other benefits, such as reducing rework, accidents, and improving efficiency across the sector by instilling better ways of working more consistently. If you need help, FIS has set up an Organisational Capability Toolkit² on our website. We also have a newly published Integrated Management Standard and a new Working Group forming to ensure our Technical Guidance, Checklists, and Procedural support evolve to provide you with the best possible assistance.

So, having made it this far, if you want to make 2025 a year to thrive, my recommendation is to make demonstrating competence a top priority for your New Year's resolutions.

Source

1. www.thefis.org/skills-hub/competency
2. www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/product-process-people

Welcome

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Reframing fit-out and the significance of the "Responsible No"

SpecFinish magazine wrapper

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WELCOME

TO THE JANUARY ISSUE OF SPECFINISH

When writing this, Christmas was approaching quickly, and I could feel the excitement building up. The festive season, for me, brings a mix of joy and anticipation, with the rush of preparations and the warmth of family gatherings just around the corner. I know this isn't the case for everyone, so I hope you at least had a peaceful time. This season passes in a flash, and then we all turn our focus to our aspirations for the New Year.

I find that, as an individual, I have an optimistic outlook, which is good. However, over time, I have come to understand the need to be realistic.

I have spoken to many industry experts regarding their outlook for the construction industry in 2025, and many appear optimistic, mainly due to the Government's commitments. It seems they are serious about approving major new projects, and we can hopefully expect investment and support to continue throughout 2025, which will give a major boost to the built environment.

However, they are also realistic and have expressed concerns about the challenges the Government will face in achieving these commitments. One expert, however, raised a very good point: there is always a range of opportunities for those prepared to seek them.

In this issue we hear from two of these industry experts, Ed Griffiths of Barbour ABI and Ian Fletcher of the British Property Federation, who reflect on 2024 and share their predictions on the opportunities and challenges the construction industry will face in 2025. You can read the full story on page 20.

On page 12 we hear from Liz McDermott, Managing Director at QuickFix Profiles, who tells us about her journey, challenges, and role as an inspiration for women in our sector.

We acknowledge on page 26 the achievements and excellence in plastering and interior systems of apprentices, students who have exceeded expectations, training delivery by colleges and training providers, training delivery by a FIS member company, mentors, and others who have supported sector training, rising stars forging careers in the sector, and lifetime contributions to sector training.

Please let us know about your projects and company news as we do like to feature members as much as we can. No project too small... david.crowson@warnersgroup.co.uk

www.thefis.org



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CITB urges construction firms to pursue apprenticeship grants

The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) is calling for construction companies to accelerate the number of apprenticeship starts by claiming CITB apprenticeship grants. From April 2023 to March 2025, CITB is investing nearly £150m into apprenticeship grants, demonstrating the scale of support that's available.

CITB's latest Employer Voice survey reported that 31% of employers are planning to take on an apprentice, with another 48% stating they may take one on. The body set up its New Entrant Support Team (NEST)¹ to help employers better navigate the recruitment process, as well as access grants and suitable training, when and where needed.

NEST, which was launched in January 2023, helped over 2,318 people start an apprenticeship that year – more than a 500% increase compared to when NEST was piloted in the North of England from September to December 2022.

To read the story in full visit:
www.specfinish.co.uk/citb-urges-construction-firms-to-pursue-apprenticeship-grants

www.citb.co.uk

Source

1. www.citb.co.uk/courses-and-qualifications/citb-apprenticeships/take-on-an-apprentice/new-entrant-support-team

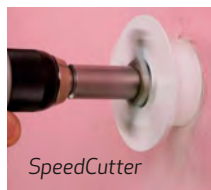
SpeedCutter: Setting a faster way to a new standard in safety for fire stopping

After years of development, SpeedCutter enters the market as a passive fire stopping solution for service penetrations. Designed for fast, safe installations, it reduces human error and environmental impact, setting a new standard in fire stopping practices. Backed by comprehensive fire test evidence (BS EN 1366-3: 2021), it ensures reliable fire protection while streamlining project efficiency.

It provides a single integrated cutter and fire collar for forming a hole and fire stopping new or existing plaster board walls. It eliminates the need for additional trades (dryliner/fire stopper) to enlarge/repair the penetration hole to the plasterboard due to poor drilling techniques, allowing penetrations to be fire stopped immediately after installation. The cable/s or pipe can be removed/replaced at a future date without affecting the integrity of the penetration.

Installation is quick and easy, thanks to a magnetic interface, with a single penetration taking less than 10 seconds. It offers a cost-effective alternative to traditional methods, reducing landfill waste by eliminating the need for multiple plastic cartridges. Additionally, all packaging is recyclable.

www.speedcutter.co.uk



SpeedCutter

Confusion over higher risk buildings definition and roof gardens

In a recent residential property tribunal, the roof terrace at Smoke House and Curing House in Hackney Wick, East London was deemed by the tribunal to be a seventh storey bringing it in scope of the definition of a higher-risk building under the Building Safety Act.

The case was brought by a group of leaseholders against the landlord (Monier Road Limited) to ensure remediation work was completed.

The tribunal agreed that Smoke House and Curing House should be classed as higher-risk "for the purposes of Part 4 of the Building Safety Act".

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Building Safety Regulator are currently considering the views expressed by the Tribunal in the recent First Tier Tribunal decision that roof gardens should be classified as a storey when determining whether a building meets the height and storey criteria under the Higher-Risk Buildings (Descriptions and Supplementary Provisions) Regulations 2023¹.

It is important to note the Tribunal itself acknowledged it was not within its jurisdiction to formally determine whether the building being considered



CLC call halt on contract amendments

The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) has published a hard-hitting statement calling a halt on the ongoing practice within the construction sector, of industry-approved forms of contract being amended by clients and their solicitors to introduce terms that are onerous and/or difficult to insure. This statement has been issued and is the conclusion to ongoing work through CLC Professional Indemnity Insurance Working Group.

The key assertion in the statement is that "standard form building and engineering contracts and professional services contracts issued by contract-producing bodies, should be used by clients with no amendments, except where necessary in the context of project-specific risks and relationships. The CLC believes that onerous amendments make contracts unviable, reduce competition, increase risk, and lead to unnecessary legal costs required to review legal liabilities created by the amendments".

To read the story in full visit:
www.thefis.org/2024/10/24/clc-call-halt-on-contract-amendments

was a higher-risk building. Until stated otherwise, the sector and regulatory bodies should continue to refer to existing Government guidance².

To read more on this subject visit:
www.thefis.org/2024/10/21/confusion-over-higher-risk-buildings-definition-and-roof-gardens

Source

1. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2023/275/contents/made
2. www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-on-the-criteria-for-being-a-higher-risk-building

VIEWS OF THE OUTGOING AND INCOMING FIS PRESIDENTS



(L-R) Ian Strangward and Philip Brown at the AGM

Philip Brown, Director of Meronden, officially stepped down as President of FIS at the AGM on 7 November 2024, congratulating the new President **Ian Strangward**, Managing Director of Architectural Wallsz. During the AGM, Philip reflected on his presidency, while Ian shared his vision for the future.

Philip shared that it was a day of mixed emotions for him, having now completed his two years as President. He explained that when he began his presidency, he had two key focuses: stepping up the fight for SME contractors and promoting sustainability.

Fight for SME contractors

He proudly spoke about the Reading Report published in 2023 as a tipping point. He said: "We have always had a great reputation as a technical authority, but this academic research into procurement and contractual practices helped to add gravitas to our voice and weight to our concerns.

"The empowering **"Responsible No"** campaign was born. The campaign is about setting boundaries and identifying the Irresponsible Asks. To support a **"Responsible No"** we have bolstered our support services, introduced a contract review service, strengthened our technical guidance, and given members free access to the British Standards they need. Through this work, we have been able to zone in on challenges and step up our lobbying. Evidence of this campaign's impact can be seen in the statement published by the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) at the end of last month, calling for a halt to the amendment of contracts on the proviso that we cannot effectively insure buildings. This announcement marks a pivotal moment."

He also mentioned FIS being at the top table, discussing retention, late payment, and collaboration, including being instrumental in establishing the Passive Fire Knowledge Group, developing guides such as Walls as a System, and working closely with the Supply Chain Sustainability School.

Sustainability

Philip commented that the FIS Sustainability Leadership Group has made great strides, attracting interest and engagement from major client groups and architects as well as enthusiastic individuals from across the sector.

He said: "Amidst a number of exciting and interesting projects FIS has taken the bold step to start a physical re-use hub. This is a live research project. The project has attracted a lot of interest, and one leading architect was so excited he wrote to all his sector contacts encouraging them to get involved."

He concluded by saying: "I have been proud to serve and have very much enjoyed working with my fellow directors and teams. FIS is here to "make a difference" and we do, every day for someone, but I am also convinced that some days we make a difference for everyone. Congratulations to Ian on his appointment as FIS President by his fellow Directors."

Ian opened by expressing his honour and gratitude to the FIS Board who have put their trust in him and invited him to serve as the next FIS President. He then thanked Philip for his sterling efforts as President.

He said: "I think we all appreciate that in FIS we have an exceptional trade body and a very dedicated and talented team."

He referred to the **"Responsible No"** and said: "No, only has authority when it is backed up with knowledge. I was sceptical about the concept of this campaign when first introduced, but Architectural Wallsz has started to employ the principles and is now seeing the benefit."

He talked about the bank of knowledge that FIS has built and commented that we now need to ensure that we are not just a font of knowledge, but a modern information provider. We must work smarter to make sure it is used—getting it to the right people in the right way.

He also mentioned the E-learning platform which will also be key. He said: "The first course we launched, 'An Introduction to the Building Safety Act', was a great start. Several hundred people have already attended, and the feedback has been very positive.

"You can expect a regular flow of new courses targeting vital interventions, job titles, and knowledge gaps.

"Much of our training will be free to members, but we will also be looking to utilise income from training to support investment in the core work of the association, ensuring that we are resourcing our team to continue to influence change and drive compliance.

"Competence is the key to compliance moving forward. A competent workforce relies on people. As the market starts to grow, FIS is stepping up our support for recruitment through Bootcamps and redoubling our efforts on apprenticeships. We need more centres of excellence to help train the next generation of workers."

Ian concluded by saying, "These are challenging times. It is not an easy period for construction, and we are almost certainly at a tipping point with new regulations and stark commercial lessons. We need to learn from the failure of ISG and strive harder to influence both the Government and the construction industry to better support our members.

"For FIS to continue growing and delivering for our community, modernisation is essential—we all need to be working smarter.

"With the committed team and strong community, I look forward to continuing to work with my fellow Board members to ensure FIS remains member-led and continues making a difference for individual members and the sector as a whole."

NEW CEILINGS AND PARTITIONS APPRENTICESHIP COURSE TARGETS SPECIFIC TRADE SKILLS IN THE FIT-OUT SECTOR

Beena Nana, Head of Skills and Training at FIS, explores the CITB National Construction College, which delivers the Interior Systems Installer Apprenticeship, Ceilings and Partitions pathway.



Beena Nana, FIS Head of Skills and Training

Apprenticeships offer a powerful solution to the skills shortage across various industries, including construction. By combining hands-on training with

education, apprenticeships help bridge the gap between the growing demand for skilled workers and the available workforce.

Apprenticeships offer a targeted, cost-effective solution to the skills shortage by developing a pool of skilled workers that meets both current and future industry demands. By attracting young talent, reskilling the existing workforce, and creating a sustainable pipeline of trained employees, apprenticeships help companies address immediate staffing needs while ensuring long-term workforce stability and growth.

To support our members, FIS is collaborating with the CITB National Construction College (NCC) to deliver the Interior Systems Installer Apprenticeship, Ceilings and Partitions pathway.

The broad purpose of the occupation is to install, repair and maintain various elements of the internal structure of a building to a high standard. In their daily work, an employee in this occupation interacts with other colleagues, other trades, site supervisor, site manager, end users, main contractors and suppliers.

The Ceilings and Partitions pathway involves the installation of various ceiling and partition systems within buildings, designed to create diverse working environments while accounting for lighting and other fixtures.



NCC extensive land reflecting a real-life construction site

About the NCC

The NCC is a well-established institution for the UK construction industry, delivering high-quality training, apprenticeships, and career development opportunities for individuals at all levels. By offering specialised training across a range of disciplines, the NCC helps address the skills gap, improve safety standards, and ensure that workers are equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in the construction sector. It plays a pivotal role in developing a skilled, capable, and qualified workforce to meet the evolving demands of the growing construction industry.

Their hands-on courses immerse students in real-world environments, equipping them with the practical skills needed for success.

The NCC has been delivering apprenticeships and commercial training programmes for nearly 60 years. Designed and taught by industry experts, their

programmes trained over 1,000 apprentices across their sites in 2024-25 and have supported more than 11,000 commercial learners overall.

Their apprenticeship programmes are high-performing, with an 86% retention rate, qualification achievement rates above the sector average, a 98% End Point Assessment pass rate, 94% of apprentices remaining in the sector, and 84% securing promotions.

Practical experience led by industry experts is integral to NCC's learning approach. They have extensive land reflecting a real-life construction site and ample indoor space enabling learners to engage in hands-on practice every step of their apprenticeship journey.

Employers and learners who work with the NCC consistently praise their block training delivery model, which immerses

apprentices in a construction environment to rapidly develop new knowledge and skills. Apprentices then return to their employer's workplace, focused and ready to apply what they've learned.

NCC apprenticeship programmes are residential, offering excellent support for learners. The facilities at NCC include individual ensuite rooms, a new restaurant, a wide range of activities at the Social Hub, a state-of-the-art gym, a Welfare Team onsite until 11:30pm providing both group and individual support, 24-hour security, and transfers from King's Lynn train station to make travel arrangements as convenient as possible.

What to expect from NCC

It offers comprehensive support to help employers assess whether an apprenticeship is the right fit for their business, and provides guidance on alternative options if it's not. Throughout the apprenticeship journey, NCC offers continuous support, advice and encouragement, ensuring that both employers and apprentices are fully equipped for success.

Employers will have dedicated account managers handling all necessary paperwork, assist with accessing Government and CITB funding, and ensure smooth administrative processes. They will collaborate with industry expert trainers who deliver immersive training programmes, enabling apprentices to develop new skills quickly and effectively.

Every 10 weeks, Apprenticeship Development Coaches (ADC) will visit the employer workplace to ensure that apprentices can apply their newfound skills in real-world settings. Additionally, NCC also provide wraparound welfare support to help apprentices thrive, stay focused, and remain committed to their apprenticeship.

Funding

For employers in England, apprenticeships are **fully funded**:

- Non-apprenticeship levy paying companies under £3m PAYE: If the learner is under 22 years old, the apprenticeship will be fully funded with no cost to your company
- Apprenticeship levy paying companies over £3m PAYE: Your Government apprenticeship levy funds will be used to pay for the apprenticeship



NCC student accommodation

- This funding covers the cost of training and end point assessment as well as all residential costs
- CITB registered companies can claim the following **CITB grant** (per apprentice):
- £2500 Attendance Grant per year
 - £3500 Completion Grant, on achievement
 - 100% reimbursement of all travel costs above £20

An additional £2,000 is payable for individuals undertaking the **Interior Systems Installer apprenticeship**:

- £1,000 paid with first quarterly attendance payment (13 weeks)
- £1,000 paid with the final quarterly attendance payment

Programme offer outline

The programme, starting in 2025 (TBC), is a 24-month programme, featuring nine immersive two-week training blocks, with workplace coaching sessions every 10 weeks to support both the apprentice and employer in applying new skills and knowledge. A three-month end-point assessment window includes a knowledge test, practical observation, and questioning.

During their apprenticeship, Interior Systems Installer Ceiling and Partition apprentices will learn how to interpret drawings to ensure work is completed to specification, Measure and mark out interior systems projects in accordance with industry standards, Install metal furring ceilings and bulkheads in

accordance with specification and manufacturers instructions, Install plasterboard partitions in accordance with specification and manufacturers instructions, Complete quality assurance checks in accordance with specification to enable handover in line with site procedures, Install and relocate modular demountable partition systems in accordance with manufacturers guidelines and specification, Fit doors, door sets, and ironmongery, fix trims/mouldings, form junctions, Fit integral glass, frames, trims, and mouldings, install glass panels and blinds and Install suspended ceiling systems (e.g. Proprietary suspended ceilings and carry out repairs. Concealed and exposed mineral and/or metal grid ceilings. Metal and/or mineral plank ceilings. Rafts and/or acoustic baffle sections).

Full details of the standard can be found by visit: www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/interior-systems-installer-v1-1

How to apply

If you are considering recruiting an apprentice for this course, FIS and NCC would be happy to discuss it with you. The team at NCC is also offering site tours of the facility and webinars. Please feel free to contact us by calling: **0121 707 0077** or emailing: beenanana@thefis.org to explore how this apprenticeship could be the right opportunity for both you and your future apprentice.

CAT A RESEARCH AIMING TO UNIFY THE MARKET

Flavie Lowres, FIS Sustainability Champion, discusses an ongoing project on the impact of the transition of CAT A to CAT B with **Matt Robinson**, Head of Sustainability at Ambit.



Matt Robinson, Head of Sustainability at Ambit

On the surface, a CAT A fit-out makes sense. It allows prospective tenants to view an office space as a blank canvas, offering them the creative license to develop the space exactly as they want. It provides the correct amount of heating, cooling, air circulation, and lighting to ensure employee comfort. And, most importantly, it helps landlords and agents sell their spaces, explained Matt.



Flavie Lowres, FIS Sustainability Champion

Matt said: "While these are all great benefits of this model, the standardised CAT A materials rarely match up with the bespoke designs of the tenants, often resulting in vast amounts of brand-new materials being discarded straight into the waste stream.

"As an industry, we are aware of this trade-off. Most people reading this have likely been involved in projects where thousands of square meters of ceiling tiles are immediately discarded following the fit-out. This is nothing new to anyone. However, until now, we have lacked data to quantify the issue and inform developers, agents, and architects about the fate of the materials they are specifying. Despite concerted efforts from some areas of the industry, the main products at risk of disposal are still included in specifications, with little consideration given to their potential early demise.

"I believe this is partly due to an "out of sight, out of mind" mentality among

some clients. Once they have leased their shiny new floorspace, they no longer feel obligated to consider the materials they installed, as the actions of the new tenants do not form part of their annual reporting. We hope that the introduction of real-world data, which quantifies the destiny of the CAT A fit-out in relation to the developer's scope, the architect's specifications, and the manufacturer's products, will prompt a conscious reaction to at least consider end of life stage in the decision-making process.

"Therefore, Ambit, the FIS, and a group of interested companies within the industry have started a research project to quantify these figures and understand what we can do to improve as an industry."

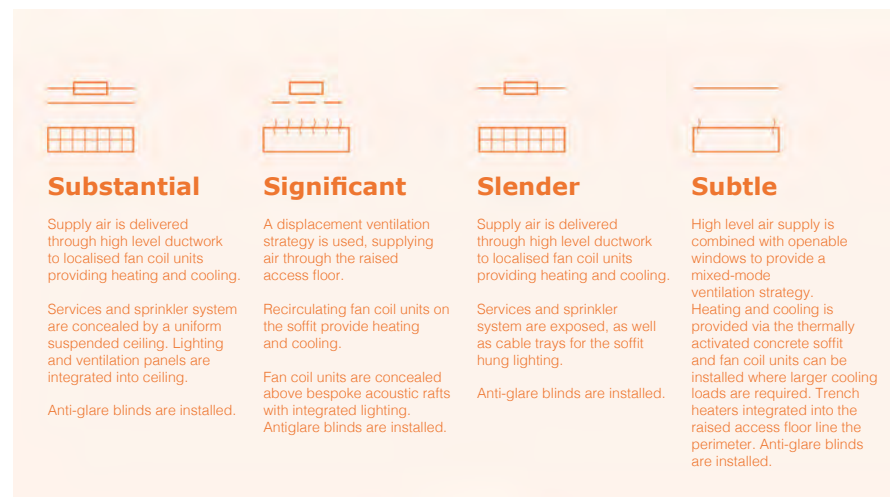
Background

Matt explained that in early 2024, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris (AHMM) released their report "Fit Out // Rip Out"¹, identifying materials that were "at risk" of being stripped out immediately following a CAT

A fit-out. They highlighted the challenges posed by the varying scope of a CAT A fit-out, which complicates the calculation of the impact of these materials. No two buildings or projects are the same: some have exposed services, others have full metal ceilings; some have mechanical ventilation, others are naturally ventilated, and so on. As a result, AHMM needed to break down CAT A fit-out into groups to provide a basis for their research. They subsequently developed four versions of CAT A, which cover most project scenarios (though there will always be some overlap between these categories). These versions can be found in Figure 1.

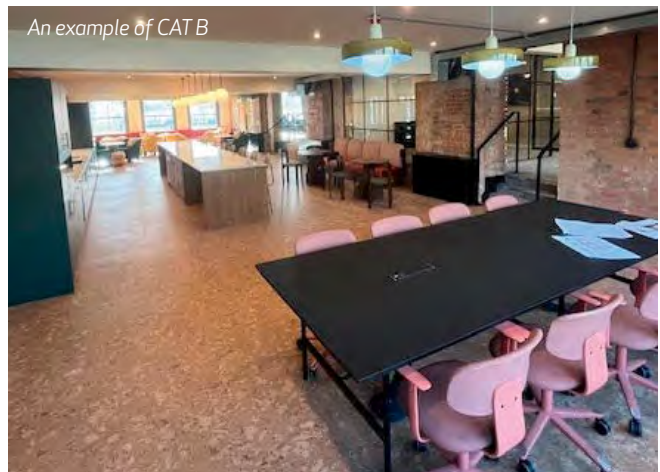
He said: "Their results outlined that by transitioning through the different scopes, from a substantial CAT A through to the subtle CAT A, the carbon that you are putting at risk of removal decreases. Something we probably all knew already, but until this report there was nothing to put a carbon figure next to these assumptions."

Figure 1. AHMM CAT A definitions





An example of CAT A



An example of CAT B

The FIS research project

Matt said: "Our research project now aims to move the conceptual data from AHMM into real-world figures. Whilst the carbon figure is important to some clients, we also want to demonstrate that CAT A is also a financial and material burden, allowing for a more tangible dataset people will resonate with.

"To gather this information, we are looking for projects where the contractor inherits a CAT A floorplate and are transitioning it into CAT B. We will then do a slightly more informed game of spot the difference to produce figures for the materials that had to be stripped out to make way for the CAT B. Below is an example of one of the projects where this shows this in practice.

"We are still too early in the study to decipher any real results with clear correlations. However, the intention of the project is to be able to take a set of information about a CAT A design; namely, the location (important to highlight the changes in tenants preferences in certain areas of London), the square meterage of the floorplate (there may be correlations on the types of tenants who can afford larger spaces and therefore desire more customisations), and the scope of CAT A proposed (within the AHMM categories), to then provide the client with estimated quantity of materials that would be stripped out at CAT B. This will of course be contextualised to also show them the cost impact, the carbon, and the materials that will be likely removed."

"We can then demonstrate to them the difference in these figures as they consciously alter their scope from a substantial CAT A, all the way through to a subtle CAT A and hopefully influence their decision-making process."

Matt went on to explain the other benefits/drivers.

A business case for manufacturers: It is hoped that once the research includes enough case studies, manufacturers of items "at risk" of removal will have evidence of the second use market that exists for their products, thus forcing considerations for new business models such as take back schemes, which show tangible evidence of expected returns.

Leasing agents sales: One of the major barriers to avoiding CAT A in the first place was the difficulty agents will have to lease the space without giving the tenant a "feel" for the fit-out. Whilst this research will hopefully increase consideration for end of life in the CAT A, it will also arm leasing agents with the ability to provide reasoning for the slender or subtle interiors, backed up with the carbon saving estimates for these decisions and thus an additional sales benefit to climate conscious tenants.

The Net Zero Carbon Building Standard:

The introduction of the new Net Zero Carbon Building Standard requires building owners to measure and report on carbon emissions five years post construction of the building. This has huge implications for a landlord as the subsequent fit-outs now need to impose carbon targets in order to remain compliant with the standard. This research will therefore demonstrate the carbon savings that they can make potentially years ahead of completion and therefore allow tenants more flexibility when it comes to their own fit-outs.

Current industry CAT A schemes

Matt concluded by saying: "There are already many businesses and organisations within the industry trying to help limit the impact of CAT A.

"Orms, the architectural practice, along with Recolight, a reuse platform for lighting, are currently spearheading the

campaign to stop CAT A lighting. Material Index, Excess Materials Exchange and many others are offering a platform to trade in used materials. Lawmans, CLS and many other strip out companies are salvaging materials to be offered for reuse to the market. SAS, OWA and other ceiling manufacturers are offering takeback schemes for some of their products.

"So, the market is moving. There is clear evidence that we are going in the right direction. But it is currently all very reactive. The research we are doing will hopefully unify the market, ensure that design decisions are informed, and there are clear strategies for all materials that are installed during CAT A have an end-of-life destination, designed for disassembly and this information is then passed on to the tenant during their fit-out."

www.ambitmoat.com

So, to move this forward we need data

Flavie said: "If you have a project where you have taken a CAT A space into CAT B, please get in touch and help transform the market to benefit the whole value chain and the planet!"

"Since starting in my role, I've witnessed some outstanding initiatives within the industry. This study is a prime example of leadership, led by Ambit and supported by the FIS Sustainability Leadership team. It demonstrates that the industry is committed to measuring its impact and finding strategies to integrate sustainability into its business-as-usual approach. Now is the time for change, and collaboration is key to accelerating the transition to net zero.

"If you want to get involved, please contact me via email at:

flavielowres@thefis.org."

Source

1. www.ahmm.co.uk/news/2024/new-study-quantifies-the-carbon-impact-of-cat-a-fit-out

DETERMINATION, HARD WORK, AND AMBITION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE DO PAY OFF

Liz McDermott, Managing Director of QuickFix Profiles, talks to **David Crowson**, Editor, about her journey, challenges, and role as an inspiration for women in our sector.

When I first requested to interview Liz for this feature, I was taken aback by how humble she was. Her initial response to me was: "I'm at a slight loss for words, if I'm honest; however, I would love to be involved." As I've gotten to know Liz, and conduct the interview I've come to understand that she is also passionate, articulate, determined, and inspirational—a true force for good in our sector.

An unconventional journey that has led to inspiring leadership by example

Liz shared her journey into the construction world, which was anything but conventional. She started in private aviation before venturing into real estate as a secondary income source, with no intention of pursuing construction full-time. However, as she began renovating properties, she found herself increasingly drawn into the industry—a surprising turn that ultimately shaped her career. She began with small homes, fixing them up and renting them out, gradually progressing to larger projects, including apartment buildings and major renovations.

Liz said: "Later, marrying the owner of a commercial drylining company opened the door for me to step into procurement and purchasing, laying the foundation for my current role at QuickFix Profiles."

Liz explained that this non-traditional entry into the sector came with unique challenges. She said: "One of the most significant challenges was combating assumptions: I was often mistaken for a Personal Assistant (PA) to 'the boss'. While I knew construction was male-dominated, I wasn't prepared for some of the barriers women face. These experiences, though disheartening at times, strengthened my resolve to make a difference."

"Taking on leadership of QuickFix Profiles wasn't just about advancing our business;

it was also about inspiring my daughter and other women, demonstrating that barriers can be broken. Being female-owned and operated is about proving that with determination and hard work, we can create change. I aim to set an example for women that, no matter the odds, they can be the change they want to see.

"As the Managing Director, I'm dedicated to improving on-site health, safety, and quality assurance. While we are a relatively small part of the industry, meaningful change must start somewhere. My leadership style emphasises hard work, trust, and ambition. I maintain an open-door policy, ensuring that every voice is heard. In our startup environment, each team member's dedication is critical to our success, and we operate as a united front"

A passion for addressing the challenges in our sector and the obstacles she has faced during her journey

When we discussed Liz's thoughts on the challenges facing our sector, she emphatically said: "I am passionate about sustainability and addressing the workforce shortage.

"Sustainability is a key focus for me. At QuickFix Profiles, we're committed to reducing waste, promoting recycling, and driving the circular economy, contributing to a more sustainable future for the industry.

"My involvement with the Fit-Out Futures group reflects my commitment to addressing the workforce shortage. This group is dedicated to attracting new talent into the sector, emphasising the importance of education, training, and recruitment. The group is actively working to address the workforce gap by encouraging more diverse participation, including increased representation of women and individuals from all backgrounds. These efforts aim to reshape perceptions of construction,



Liz McDermott, Managing Director of QuickFix Profiles

showcasing it as a viable and rewarding career path for everyone."

We also discussed the challenges that Liz has faced and overcome which may impact others in a similar situation. She said: "I believe there is resistance in the construction industry to change. This is a recurring hurdle, with many people clinging to traditional ideals and methods. I do, however, feel that gradual progress is being made. As a woman in a male-dominated field, I've often had to prove my expertise more than my male counterparts. Assumptions about my capabilities have been frustrating, but resilience and a commitment to excellence have allowed me and the QuickFix team to build a reputation that speaks for itself."

A humble award winner

Liz's determination, hard work, trust, and ambition were recognised when she was named one of the CITB Top 100 Most Influential Women in Construction in 2024 and won the Most Influential Client award, given to those who have made a considerable and real impact at an organisational or national level within one of three sub-categories (client, designer, and contractor). I asked her how she felt about receiving this accolade, and she said:

PEOPLE IN BRIEF



Liz working onsite



Liz's daughter, Fallon McDermott, whom Liz is working to inspire

"It was a deeply rewarding moment. To be shortlisted, let alone win, was truly humbling. Construction has many inspiring women, all driven to make a change, so to be included among them was an honour. I hope this recognition encourages more women and girls to consider construction as a career path and see its incredible potential!"

A look ahead

Liz concluded by telling me about her vision for the construction industry which is safer, more inclusive, and better for the next generation. She said: "Through our work at QuickFix Profiles, I hope to leave a positive legacy—one that inspires others to see construction not only as a career option but as a field where they can thrive. For women, especially, my message is clear: this industry is for you, and your contributions are both needed and valued."

www.quickfixprofiles.com



etag makes an executive team appointment

Drylining, insulation, and M&E solutions distributor etag has appointed Emma Hoten-Pool as its Commercial Director. Emma has an extensive commercial background in the construction supply sector, focusing on strategic growth, operational improvements and data-driven marketing for numerous builders' merchant firms, as well as utilities, manufacturing, and e-commerce businesses based in the UK and Europe.

www.etagfixings.co.uk



OWA strengthens its sales force in Scotland

Acoustic ceilings manufacturer OWA has expanded its UK based specification sales team with the appointment of Graeme Hudson. In his new role as specification sales manager, Graeme will provide dedicated regional support to customers and contractors across Scotland.

Graeme brings with him over a decade of experience working in the commercial suspended ceiling sector, and will use his knowledge and expertise to support the wider specification of OWA's metal and mineral acoustic ceiling solutions.

To read more visit: www.specfinish.co.uk/owa-strengthens-its-sales-force-in-scotland

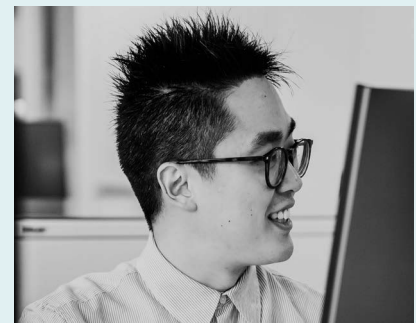
www.owa-ceilings.co.uk



Adaptavate appoints Tim Myatt as new Head of Sales

Adaptavate, welcomes Tim Myatt as Head of Sales. Tim will play a key role in continuing to build and grow Adaptavate's customer's network. He has broad experience within the built environment, having been integral to the development of Build Aviator (Saint-Gobain) and held roles such as Group Commercial Manager at a well-known glazing company.

www.adaptavate.com



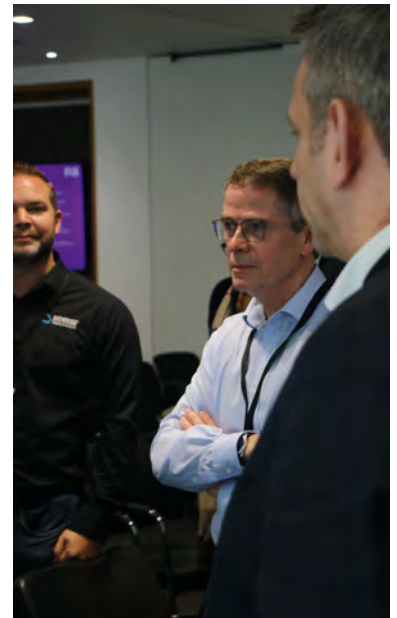
Fit-out contractor adds second MD

BW Workplace Experts has promoted Kevin P'ng to joint managing director.

Kevin will work alongside fellow joint managing director Peter Nagle as part of the senior leadership team managing the firm's strategy for growth.

Kevin has been with BW Workplace Experts for 11 years, holding positions including commercial director and chief commercial officer.

www.wearebw.com



REFRAMING FIT-OUT AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “RESPONSIBLE NO”

Two recent FIS events, led by **Iain McIlwee**, Chief Executive, and **Anthony Armitage**, General Counsel at Thirdway Interiors, brought together industry experts to explore the ongoing challenges and possible solutions related to commissioning, contracts, procurement, payment, and design development.

The discussions at the roundtable event hosted by Cundall London, inspired Iain and Anthony to promote further dialogue in a session titled “Challenging the Fit-Out Process” at the Commercial Fit-Out Industry Day, hosted by Hill Dickinson.

Both sessions were opened with Iain explaining to the attendees that, while we talk a lot about “transformation” in our sector, the frustration is that little change is almost imperceptible. He emphasised that now is a pivotal time for the industry, and if we don’t see the required changes now, we will miss a generational opportunity.

Iain introduced Anthony who said: “If construction is perceived to be “the bottom of the food chain,” it is, in part, due to adversarial practices that do not help its reputation.

I want to now share with you my thoughts regarding the devil in the detail of contracts and why we need to be pushing harder than ever to revert to standard form contracts unamended, looking at the most common and concerning areas of amendment and the importance of our sector in getting behind

the Conflict Avoidance Process and Pledge from the Conflict Avoidance Coalition (CAC).

Anthony explained the in-house legal team at Thirdway helps maintain cash-flow and margin and manages and mitigates liability and risk for the business by reviewing, negotiating and enforcing building contracts.

He said: “Businesses, of course, enter into contracts every day, and many of them are unwritten. The law does not differentiate between written and unwritten contracts. They are equally effective and enforceable and they are a key pillar of the rule of law. Society would not function without them.”

The challenging world of contract amendments

“It is only a tiny proportion of contracts that are ever negotiated, which brings me to standard form building contracts like the JCT. Their whole purpose is to avoid the need for negotiation. They have been in development for more than 150 years. In 1866 the General Builders Association said about them “it is not right to bring under the builder’s consideration legal conditions the effect and

value of which he cannot rightly estimate without consulting his solicitor.” said Anthony.

Anthony shared with the attendees at both events an experience that he had a few years ago when helping his then-trainee architect wife get her head around JCT contracts. He said: “I was amazed that a “standard building contract” should be subject to so many schedules of amendments and noted how crazy it is that the contract amendments are often bigger than the actual contract itself.”

He expressed that standard form building contracts are as good today as they’ve always been, so why do law firms routinely issue schedules of amendments to them? The negotiations that follow are time-consuming and damagingly adversarial at the start of what should be a collaborative relationship.

He said: “I believe lawyers have been at fault over the years, as the confused detail of merged and amended contract terms and resulting disputes have created work for them. As a lawyer myself, I would like to see more pushback against the adversarial behaviours in our industry.



“The most frequent reason given by law firms for their amendments is to make the contract “institutionally acceptable” but I cannot get a coherent answer on what that term means. Delivery teams do not adapt the way they run projects according to what amendments are made to the contract, so there is a complete disconnect between the parties. It is impossible to interpret amendments because they are unintelligible to a non-lawyer.

“Nearly the only time amendments are referred to is when a dispute arises, which defeats the whole purpose of having a standard form contract in the first place. It also impacts on disputes that go to an adjudication. That process relies on the ability of the adjudicator to reach a summary judgment on a clear and easily construed contract.

“The construction industry must start saying a resounding “NO” to clients and their law firms issuing routine amendments. The difficulties that amendments cause are neatly illustrated in the Delay, Operation, Cost, Time, Oversight, and Risk (DOCTOR) graphic. The diagnosis is a sickness caused by accepting amendments with a prognosis of deteriorating financial health.”

Providing a platform for early intervention and a cooperative ethos

The Conflict Avoidance Process and Pledge from the Conflict Avoidance Coalition (CAC) focus on early intervention to prevent issues on construction projects from escalating into disputes. This initiative has now been embraced by over 500 businesses, including Morgan Sindall, Network Rail, Siemens, Indegla's, Kier, and Transport for London, covering the entire construction process, explained Anthony.

He said: “Thirdway’s interest in the CAC Pledge emerged following the publication of an article in the Solicitors Journal titled “JCT Building Contracts: What’s the Point of Amendments?”

“For the reasons mentioned above such as reducing delays, minimising costs, saving time, balancing risk fairly, and promoting efficient operation and collaborative working in construction and engineering projects, the Pledge offered the ideal platform for us to advance the messages of early intervention and a cooperative ethos beyond just better contracting. It was an easy decision for the business to sign up. We now encourage

our clients and suppliers to join us in this commitment to align our interests on each project. We recommend incorporating the Pledge’s sample conflict avoidance clause into our building contracts as standard. It truly is a case of “what’s not to like?”

Anthony challenged the attendees: “We all need to educate the entire sector on the benefits of the Pledge and encourage employers to question their lawyers more thoroughly about the real motivations behind routinely issuing increasingly complex schedules of amendments. Changing this attitude will be a challenge, but with the Pledge’s help, we can all be ready for the task.”

To show your commitment to the industry and sign up for the Pledge visit: <https://rics-mkt-prod2-m.adobe-campaign.com/lp/LP14>

Iain looked specifically at challenges in design intent and the consequences of tendering and procurement not being integrated into the design development process.

He said: “As a sector, we continue to make bold statements about eliminating retention without fully understanding the how and the why. Project bank accounts haven’t solved the problem, and the Government hasn’t supported this approach as we had hoped.

“Human beings resist change and rarely change unless the risk of staying the same is greater than the risk of change. FIS wants to play an instrumental role in driving that change through observations, research, communication, standardise – normalise – industrialise and lobby for adoption and acceptance.

“Our role is to help members understand how we can influence and how we can support them. There is more power in collective conversations than exists in individual, isolated conversations.”→



Procurement research: Findings and key changes we need to focus on

Iain explained that in Stuart Green's Making Sense of Construction Improvement publication, he describes how technology is often viewed as the saviour — first BIM, and now AI. In reality, this is only part of the solution, a tool to support a better process.

Iain commented that the procurement research conducted by FIS in collaboration with Stuart and his team at the University of Reading revealed some interesting data on ridiculous lead-in times, systematic tendency towards risk dumping, and cascading of responsibility.

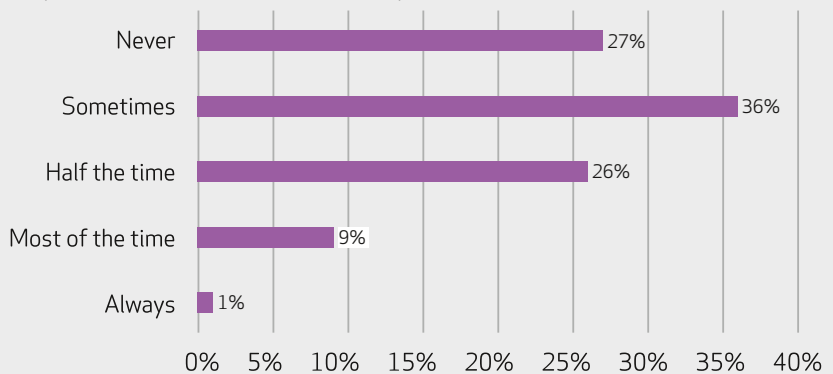
He said: "While the average lead time to contract award was six weeks, contractors were often required to mobilise and start on-site within two to three weeks, frequently with additional design responsibility. "In response to the question, "How often do you get a decision within the specified contractual limit?" the answer was worrying: only 1% said "always."

"Poor record-keeping of completed work means that everyone gets the blame if and when things go wrong. We are increasingly seeing issues where contractor design portions are not aligned with the actual design process, just an attempt to pin the design liability on the specialist if things go wrong.

"Key changes we should focus on include retrospective price changes, final accounts exceeding the initial price (63% of respondents confirmed this), and timescales overrunning (53% of respondents confirmed this)."

Iain went on to explain that while nine recommendations were made in the publication for the fit-out sector, three were given particular focus.

If required to submit design information for approval, how often do you receive a decision within the specified contractual limit?



Source: University of Reading

Firstly, The Construction Act should be amended and aligned with the principles of the Building Safety Act to prevent indiscriminate risk dumping. The key driver is to ensure clarity in the allocation of design responsibility.

Secondly, there is significant scope for the increased adoption of multi-project negotiated frameworks. Such frameworks should extend throughout the supply chain to include a preferred network of subcontractors and suppliers.

Thirdly, early involvement of the supply chain depends upon timely contractual appointments. Key procurement milestones should be scheduled at the earliest possible date and contractual appointments should not be needlessly delayed.

To read the report in full and the recommendations made to the fit-out sector, visit: <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/111049/1/2301271-FIS-Survey-Report-2023-v14%202.pdf>

He took the opportunity to reaffirm that FIS exists to support its members in achieving compliance, and best practices, and giving them a voice and the involvement of "I" (individual member), "We" (FIS and its collective members), and "They" (others in the sector) is required to make change happen. Also, one of FIS strengths is taking complex information and disseminating it through simple guides. He said FIS "Guide to the Building Safety Act¹" was one of our most downloaded publications in 2023. This year we have turned this guide into a training course.

A risk managed approach

Iain recalled another point that was discussed at the roundtable event, namely that the design development process and contractual processes often seem to work at odds with effective design co-ordination and rather than being complimented by



an effective procurement process are undermined by it. He reflected that it is disappointing that the Design Responsibility Matrix (DRM) is not referenced in the Regulatory Guidance or in PAS 8671:2022, Built Environment – Framework for Competence of Individual Principal Designers – Specification

We have tools like “Provisional sums” which should drive decisions back into the design process if fixed prices are essential, but are often bullied out at the tender stage.

If Duty, Contactual Responsibility, and Design do not line up it leaves a real concern that buildings are not insured.

Iain recited that Insurance is priced on the assumption that risk is effectively managed through the supply chain by competent individuals against a common and shared understanding of risk and how it should be managed. This is primarily based on the adoption of standard forms of contract that clearly detail and apportion risk in line with agreed industry norms. Where businesses are stepping away from standard forms of contract through extensive schedules of the amendment (notwithstanding freestanding additions to the contract template required to adequately detail the works) it should be recognised that, if not completed clearly and efficiently, this can impact contract clarity, potentially distort risk and consequently may impact the extent to which insurance covers these risks.

He then outlined the FIS “Responsible No”² campaign launched by FIS and explained how it calls for pushback from the supply chain in not accepting what has been described as an “Irresponsible Ask” (rather than simply an unreasonable one).

He said: “Members are often unaware of what they’re signing up for, which is why the FIS Contract Review service is proving to be useful.”

An industry agreed starting point – The “Irresponsible Ask”

Iain said: “A good place to start with the “Irresponsible Ask” is Construction Leadership Council (CLC) which has strongly come out to condemn contract amendments, raising legitimate concerns about undermining the insurability of products if risk is not clear or irresponsibly placed. They have also endorsed Build UK’s recommendations on clauses that should never be presented.”

He explained that the CLC has proposed:

- **Fitness for purpose:** Do not include a “fitness for purpose” standard of care for design (except in the process sector).
- **Unquantifiable risks:** Do not include delay/loss and expense risk where not reasonably ascertainable for dealing with asbestos; fossils, antiquities and other objects of interest or value; unexploded ordnance; and the carrying out by statutory bodies of work in pursuance of their statutory obligations in relation to the works, or the failure to carry out such work
- **Specified Perils:** Do not include that “Specified Perils” (as defined in JCT) will not give rise to extension of time where caused by the (sub-)contractor
- **Breach of contract:** Do not include a blanket indemnity for breach of contract, Uncapped liabilities, Do not include uncapped (sub-)contractor liability (save for certain aggregate cap carve-outs such as fraud, misrepresentation, personal injury/death, wilful default)

• **Performance securities:** Where the following forms of performance security are required:

- Do not use a pure on-demand performance bond
- Do not use a Parent Company Guarantee (PCG) which does not include a ‘no greater liability’ clause (save for legal costs) and equivalent rights of defence
- Do not use a collateral warranty which does not include a ‘no greater liability’ clause

The session at the Commercial Fit-out Industry Day concluded with small groups being asked to consider the “Irresponsible Asks” and what three things they would ask of a responsible client?

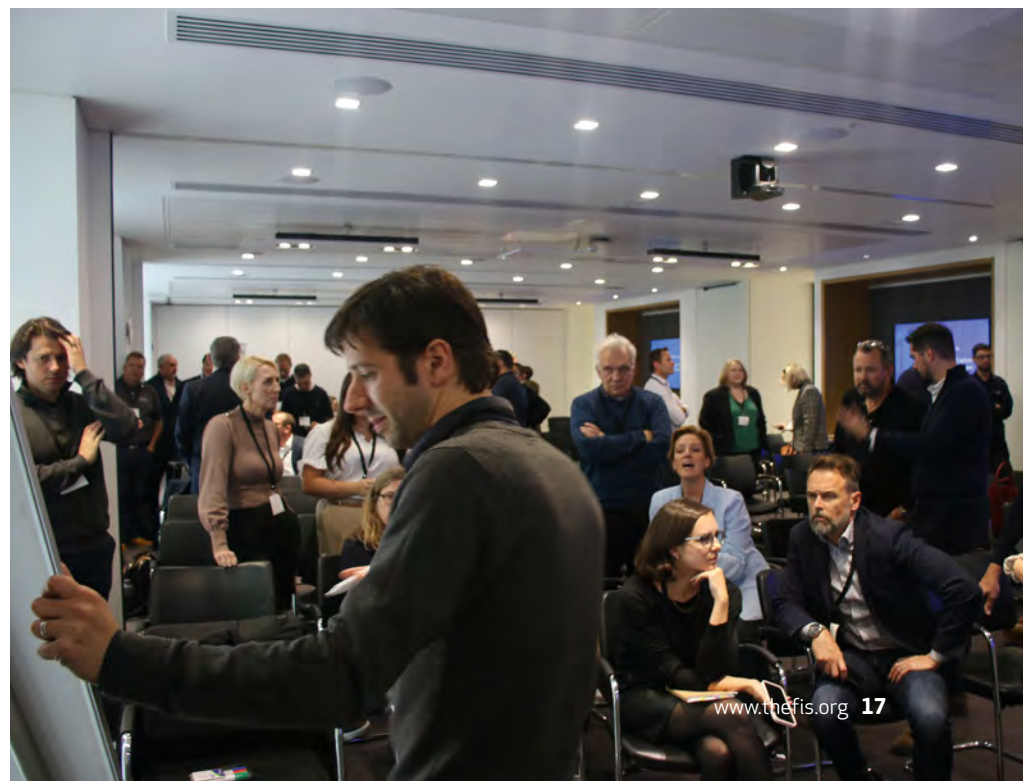
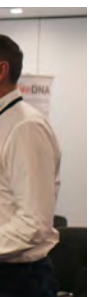
After discussion the groups identified:

- Clearly defined scope
- Realistic time/programme
- Central mechanism
- Project specific
- Issuing correct contracts
- Time and resources

At both events, Iain encouraged attendees to bring any issues to FIS’s attention so that poor practices can be addled out.

Source

1. www.thefis.org/?td_restrict_media_path_by_role=/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/5782-FIS-Guide-Building-Safety-Act.pdf
2. www.thefis.org/2024/11/13/empowering-the-responsible-no-2



NATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS FOR FIRE RESISTANCE AND MANAGING THE TRANSITION FROM BS 476 TO EN 13501-2

James Parlour, FIS Technical and Vetting Manager, explores the changes and impact on our sector as the substantiation of fire resistance performance transitions from the BS 476 series to classification under EN 13501-2.



James Parlour, FIS Technical and Vetting Manager

The industry has long anticipated that substantiation of fire resistance performance would eventually move from the methodology afforded by the BS 476 series of standards to the

European methodology where performance is classified according to EN 13501-2.

The industry understandably however, sought clarity before committing to the expense of re-testing products. After a consultation at the end of 2022, we had clarity that national classifications for reaction to fire would no longer be cited in Approved Document B starting next year, a move that was both expected and welcomed by the industry. The position on fire resistance, however, was not clarified until September of this year.

This means that Approved Document B will no longer cite the BS 476 series. It is worth pointing out that Approved Document B is guidance only and so following this does not necessarily guarantee compliance with Building Regulations. Approved Document B also doesn't apply to all building types, nor does it apply outside of England where devolved nations have their guidance.

Nonetheless, after the change takes effect in 2029 it is expected that projects will not be designed using the BS 476 methodology and subsequent specifications will request fire resistance to be demonstrated using EN testing and classification according to EN 13501-2.

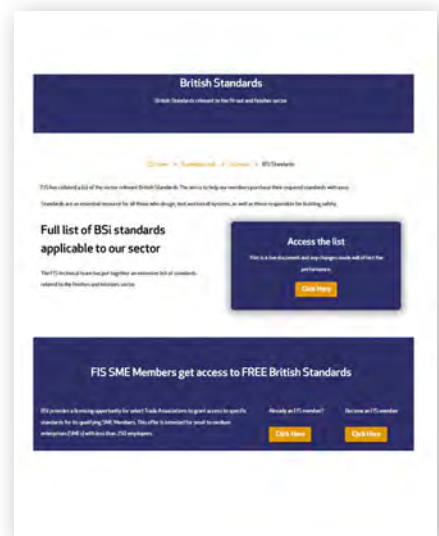
What are the differences?

The BS 476 series contains several standards that outline test methodologies for walls (both loadbearing and non-loadbearing), doors, and ceilings. These methodologies submit a specimen of the intended construction and give only limited guidance on the broader application of the results. In order then to satisfy performance against a comprehensive product range, that includes configurations that cannot be tested for reasons of size or complexity, assessments must be undertaken by a third party in accordance with passive fire protection forum (PFPF) guidelines.

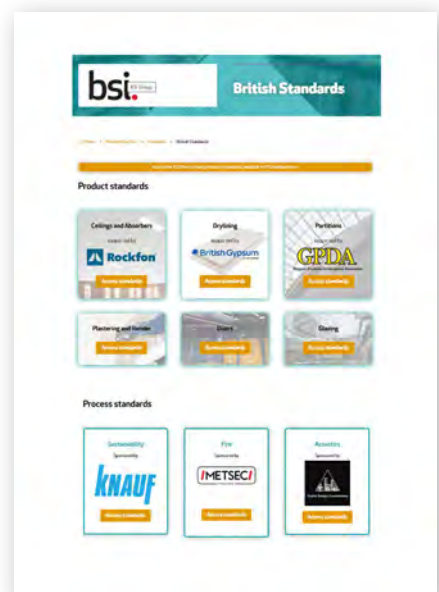
The European methodology similarly has several test standards for each product discipline, however, the rules for the broader application of the results are much more controlled and fall within two categories as follows:

- Direct Field of Application (DIAP)
 - The DIAP of application rules allows some conservative variations from the tested configuration and are set out in the associated test methodology.
- Extended Field of Application (EXAP)
 - The EXAP allows for a wider range of variations and the rules are set out in a separate standard for each product discipline. EXAP reports can only be prepared by a 3rd party organisation accredited for the relevant test according to EN ISO/IEC 17025.

Crucial for the European methodology is that all test results and EXAP reports need to be classified in accordance with BS EN 13501-2 to obtain the appropriate performance characteristic representing fire resistance measured in minutes and prefixed by R, E, and/or I accordingly:



FIS website: British Standards relevant to the fit-out and finishes sector



FIS website: bsi. British Standards

- **R - Loadbearing:** The ability of the element of construction to withstand fire exposure on one or more faces, for a period of time, whilst remaining intact and fulfilling its intended support function.
- **E - Integrity:** The ability of the element of construction forming a compartment to withstand fire exposure on one side only, without the transmission of fire to the unexposed side as a result of the passage of hot gases, smoke, and flames.
- **I - Insulation:** The ability of the element of construction forming a compartment to withstand fire exposure on one side only, without the transmission of fire to the unexposed side as a result of significant transfer of heat.

It is also important to note that BS and EN test methodologies whilst similar, are not identical in terms of the furnace and measurements, so it should not be assumed that a product that successfully passes a BS 476 series test will necessarily pass the equivalent EN fire test.

How to make the transition?

Due to some of the abovementioned differences, moving from national classifications to the EN 13501-2 classification is not just a case of re-testing against the equivalent standard. Manufacturers will need to familiarise themselves with the EN standards for walls, doors, and ceilings not only to understand which tests are relevant but also what

extensions will be viable using the DIAP rules. It will also be important to get advice from EN ISO/IEC 17025 accredited third parties about what will be achievable using EXAP reports and help to plan appropriate configurations for maximising test data. This information will help to define how many tests are required to demonstrate a full product range.

Those undertaking testing will need to familiarise themselves with EN 1363-1 which sets the general rules against all other EN test standards. In particular, this standard deals with the relationship between rigid and flexible supporting constructions, and how the application of test evidence varies depending on whether these constructions are standard as defined by EN 1363-1. The importance of standard supporting constructions was recently discussed in more detail in the October 2024 issue of SpecFinish.

Some manufacturers will also use this as an opportunity to re-evaluate their fire-resistant product lines against the resource burden of re-testing considering whether the products will perform to the same level, need to be re-designed or modified, and whether market factors affecting demand and sale will impact decisions.

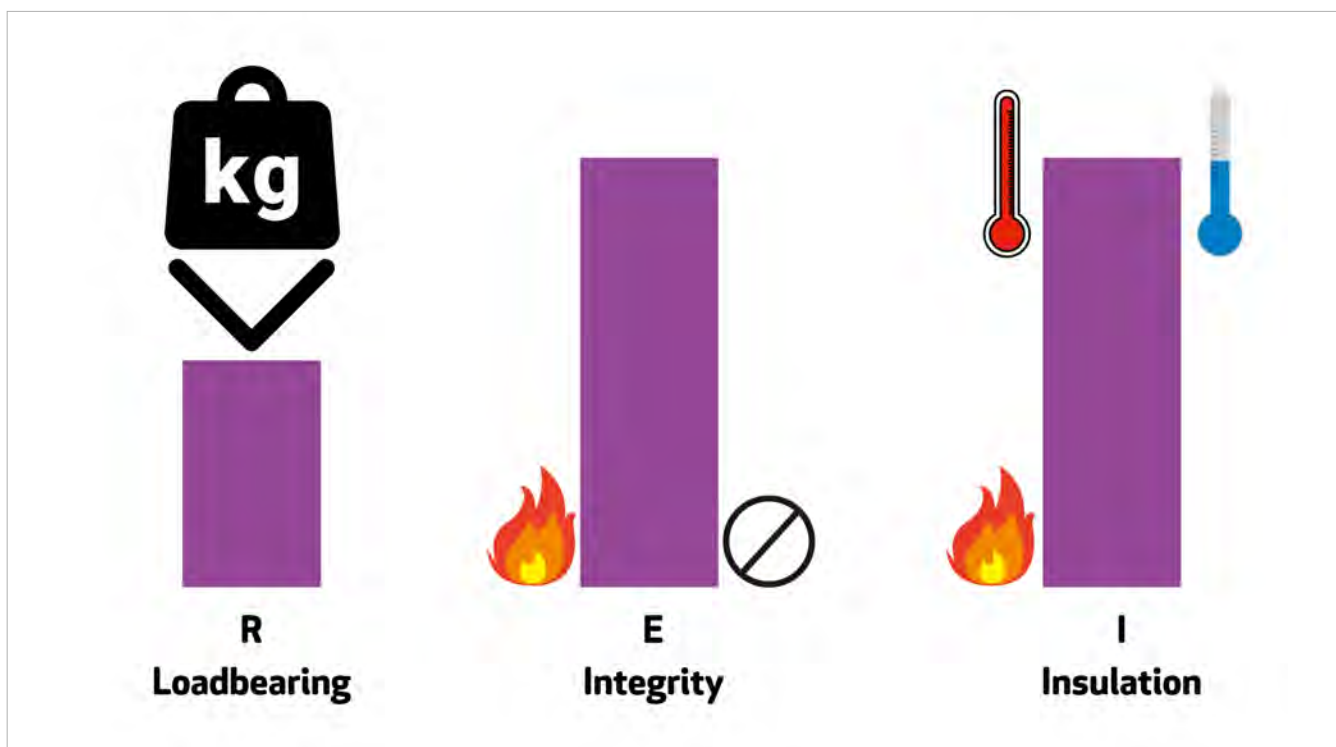
How can FIS help?

SME contractors with FIS membership have the opportunity to sign up for access to 100 standards for free, and many of the relevant standards discussed are included.

FIS has also prepared a more comprehensive list of standards applicable to our sector (including all the associated EXAP standards) that is filterable and searchable by multiple fields which is designed to be as easily navigable as possible when you don't already know what you're looking for. To view the standards visit: www.thefis.org/membership-hub/standards/british-standards

The full list of the relevant test (including EXAP) standards should be sought from the searchable list mentioned above or from the BSI knowledge portal, however, the most important core standards about non-loadbearing internal walls, ceilings, and doors are listed below:

- **BS EN 1363-1:** Fire resistance tests - General requirements
- **BS EN 1364-1:** Fire resistance tests for non-loadbearing elements - Walls
- **BS EN 1364-2:** Fire resistance tests for non-loadbearing elements - Ceilings
- **BS EN 1634-1:** Fire resistance and smoke control tests for door and shutter assemblies, openable windows, and elements of building hardware - Fire resistance test for door and shutter assemblies and openable windows
- **BS EN 13501-2:** Fire classification of construction products and building elements - Classification using data from fire resistance and/or smoke control tests, excluding ventilation services.



LOOKING AHEAD: A PROMISE OF INVESTMENT AND GROWTH; HOWEVER, CHALLENGES REMAIN

Two industry experts reflect on 2024 and share their predictions on the opportunities and challenges the construction industry will face in 2025.



Ed Griffiths, Head of Business and Client Analytics at Barbour ABI

2024 was a major year for change in the UK construction industry and across the wider national landscape.

Some of the seismic changes that we saw were to be expected. For instance, whilst the change in Government may have come a few months earlier than expected, the outright Labour majority result had been predicted long before the election was called, explained **Ed Griffiths**, Head of Business and Client Analytics at Barbour ABI.

Ed said: "Unfortunately, the major story in the back half of 2024 in construction surrounded the collapse of Tier One contractor ISG, amongst the backdrop of many other smaller built environment businesses folding last year. ISG were the biggest construction collapse since the demise of Carillion in 2018. Whilst it will always send shockwaves when a business of this size fails, the fact that a large-scale contractor failed was sadly an inevitability in the current climate.

"Razor-thin profit margins, instability of materials prices and labour challenges are forcing many contractors to take on loss-making projects in order to promote short-term cashflow. "Needless to say, this isn't sustainable long-term for any business and would suggest that we can expect to see further businesses failing in 2025.

"The above challenges that plague large contractors are also massively affecting SMEs (particularly materials price rises and worker shortages). According to Building

Cost Information Service (BCIS), insolvencies in the year up to the end of August were 1.1% higher than in August 2023 and a scary 33.9% higher than in the year leading up to the pre-pandemic August 2019.

"With continuing global instability predicted for 2025, unfortunately, it seems that built environment SMEs can expect more challenges ahead."

"Responsible No" campaign

Ed went on to explain that many leadership councils, groups, and representative bodies in the industry are working to resolve the challenges mentioned, specifically the loss-making projects faced by contractors.

One such campaign is the **"Responsible No"**, launched by FIS. This campaign encourages contractors to say no when the risk they are being asked to absorb is too great, the request moves them outside what they are insured for, the contract is too onerous, or they are being asked to do the impossible. FIS say that sometimes, the right thing to do is to say no. It isn't easy, but the alternative could be catastrophic!

To read more about the campaign, visit: www.thefis.org/2024/11/13/empowering-the-responsible-no-2.

"Even good news for the industry in 2024 wasn't that great under inspection. Whilst contract award values (at the time of writing)

were up 18% against the same period in 2023, the number of projects being contract awarded was down by 13%, suggesting a continuing dearth of winnable projects for many businesses in the built environment into (at least) the early months of 2025," said Ed.

So, what can we expect in 2025?

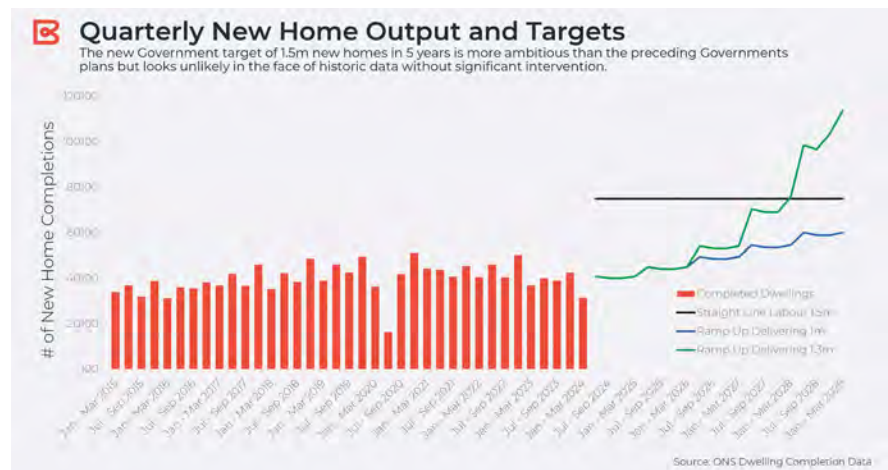
Ed provided his insights into three of the Labour Party's pledges that will significantly impact the construction industry: Housebuilding targets, green energy and infrastructure pipeline, and healthcare.

Housebuilding targets

In theory, a big opportunity for the construction industry in 2025, and for the next several years beyond, comes from the housebuilding targets set by the new Labour Government.

However, as Barbour ABI's 100 Days of Labour webinar in October 2024 showed, and as mentioned in the feature by Dr Noble Francis, "Can the UK Government overcome challenges to meet its housing targets and planning reforms?" in the October 2024 issue of SpecFinish, the chance of Labour meeting their target of building 1.5 million new homes during their Government is nigh-on impossible.

Looking at the chart, the orange bars represent quarterly ONS Dwelling Completion Data since 2015.



The black, green, and blue lines, added by Barbour ABI, indicate the levels of activity required to meet the 1.5 million homes target.

This analysis helps to illustrate why it is extremely difficult to envision the Government meeting its 1.5 million homes target.

Green energy and infrastructure pipeline

In September and October 2024, Barbour ABI data showed approvals of infrastructure projects increased by 136% and 81%, respectively, compared to the month prior, highlighting a laser focus from the new Government on driving through a green energy transition.

One project to watch for upcoming approval is the Ossian Offshore Wind Farm, which SSE Renewables has stated is set to become one of the largest offshore wind farms in the world, and is valued at £3.6bn.

It appears this Government is serious about approving major new projects, and we can hopefully expect this level of investment and support to continue throughout 2025 and give a major shot in the arm to the built environment.

Healthcare

In their pre-election manifesto, the Labour Party pledged to save the NHS by cutting wait times, doubling the number of cancer scanners, training thousands of new staff, and delivering a "Dentistry Rescue Plan."

With a dated stock of healthcare buildings in the UK and Labour being traditionally more wedded to the notion of the NHS than the Conservative Party, it would be nice to hope for a substantial uptick in the healthcare construction pipeline than what we've seen in recent years.

However, it must be noted that in Labour's new plans for cutting wait times and improving care, there is very little reference to the construction of new hospitals or health centres, with just one sentence committing to the New Hospitals Programme within the nearly 2,800 words on NHS reform within their manifesto. Instead, their plans revolve around enticing staff to work longer hours and pooling resources from existing hospitals to meet their goals.

Whilst the Government may indeed be successful in reaching its goals for the NHS with these measures, they are unlikely to have any major impact on the healthcare sector for construction businesses.

www.barbour-abi.com



*Ian Fletcher,
Director of Policy (Real Estate)
at
British Property
Federation (BPF)*

Ian Fletcher, Director of Policy (Real Estate) at British Property Federation (BPF), explained that the property investment sector has diversified over the past decade. From a position where most investment was in office or retail premises, today, the sector is investing in about 15 different forms of real estate, which include all the living sectors (affordable housing, build-to-rent, student accommodation, hotels, and various forms of housing for older people). Commercial property investment has also diversified into healthcare, life sciences, and logistics.

Ian said: "Generally, diversification is positive for investors, such as pension funds, making the sector more resilient overall. However, it also makes the sector more difficult to "read" and generalise about, as different parts of the sector get impacted by different factors.

"This said, the fundamentals for most parts of the sector have been challenging over the past two years. Since the Kwarteng Budget, the cost of debt has risen, and development and operational costs have also been on the march. A sector that thrives on certainty has not liked either the nation's flaky politics or economic unpredictability. Its reaction has been to hunker down.

"In sectors such as build-to-rent, it has meant that very little new development has started. The focus has been on getting developments that have started complete and operational. Build-to-rent's desire to complete buildings, however, has meant that it now represents 10% of housing output, albeit of a smaller overall housing market.

"In the traditional commercial sectors – office and retail – significant uncertainty has also led more building owners to consider refurbishment, rather than necessarily demolition and rebuild. And whilst the sector would like confirmation from the Government that minimum energy efficiency standards will be EPC 'B' by 2030, there are other drivers, not least investor sentiment,

that will continue to fuel the retrofit market."

Looking ahead to 2025, Ian commented that there are many reasons to be optimistic. He said: "Decisive election results should help resolve the sector's concerns about political uncertainty. The budget is now out of the way, which may also lead the sector to feel that the worst is behind it. Add in a couple of interest rate cuts, and there is optimism that 2025 will see development activity improve across most sectors.

"As Ed has mentioned the Budget showed the new Government is committed to increasing public sector investment which is usually good news for the property sector. Public infrastructure investment provides new areas of growth and therefore new opportunities for consequential private sector investment. And whilst the Government's industrial strategy named neither property nor construction amongst its eight growth sectors, many of those eight, such as life sciences or the creative industries, will rely on better 'space' if they are to maximise their potential."

Ian explained that the Government has also made several other policy announcements that will support parts, or all, of the property investment sector. He said: "Planning reform, with a revised National Planning Policy Framework and a slew of other announcements, from greater resources to building on the grey belt, declare an intent to use the property sector as an avenue to growth and national renewal. Similarly, announcements on affordable housing suggest the new Government wants to increase provision significantly.

"Inevitably, some policy decisions may create bumps in the road. The new building safety regime for higher-risk buildings is still bedding in and may continue to cause delays and discourage activity well into 2025. Rising payroll and business rate bills for some large employers may have knock-on consequences on spend on premises.

"Nevertheless, even in those property sectors that have faced uncertain demand, notably retail and office, there are reasons to be optimistic. Significant investment will be needed to reconfigure and repurpose existing stock if it is to appeal to contemporary occupiers and their customers, for example, experiential retail, adapting to hybrid working, or a desire for more sustainable places."

He concluded by saying: "On balance, the outlook for the property sector in 2025, looks positive, and with variety comes a range of opportunities for those prepared to seek them."

www.bpf.org.uk

THE RISE OF SUPERIOR SECTIONS

A timeline of key milestones, both ambitious and challenging, on the path from a relatively unknown entity to becoming the leading manufacturer and supplier of Drywall metal profiles and accessories to the UK fit-out sector. The business prides itself on providing an unmatched service offering from its Walsall, West Midlands base. Significant investment in people, stock, and manufacturing capacity has been rewarded with significant growth in both customers and volumes since entering the drywall market in 2009.

Superior Sections based at 32 Regal Drive, Walsall was purchased as a small, family-owned business by a team experienced in roll-forming metal profiles, headed by Stuart Mason. The initial goal was to become a significant player in the UK roll-forming metal sector by supplying businesses across the UK and beyond while challenging the existing major players. Stuart immediately set about developing a team of managers who could grow the business and work toward achieving this goal.

2008



The business's growth and stability enabled diversification into the drywall sector. The business invested in state-of-the-art roll forming equipment to allow us entry into the competitive supply of own-brand drywall metal profiles to the construction fit-out sector.

2015



1993

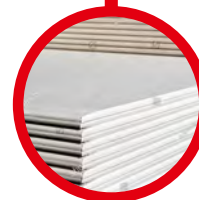
Superior Sections was founded.



2007

The 2008 financial crisis taught independent businesses like Superior valuable lessons on its impact on markets and customers, with several casualties along the way. Through hard work and perseverance, we overcame it. The first production line for in-line punched and roll formed bespoke profiles was introduced, laying the foundation for supplying higher value-added profiles that were previously produced via secondary and third operations.

In the first financial year, both sales tonnage and turnover increased. Roll-formed metal profiles reached 3,000 tonnes, with a turnover of £2.7 million.



2009

The business recognised an opportunity to enter the renewables sector creating bespoke profiles that made up mounting frameworks for solar panels on large scale solar farms. This was made possible by the strategic expansion of its pre-pierce and roll forming capacity and utilising our design knowledge and experience to overcome problems previously only solved with extrusions.

2025
THE FUTURE

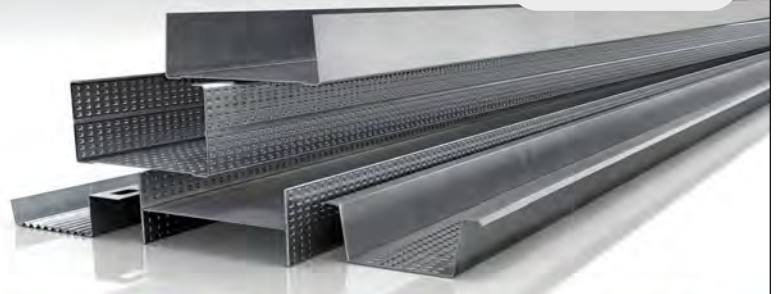
Growth of our personnel: Superior has a rich history of personnel with vast experience in the roll-forming sector. Key personnel have several hundred years of combined knowledge and experience gathered from Superior Sections and/or working for competitors in our markets.

We strongly believe that employees are the lifeblood of our business and without a great team of people, we could not have achieved anything like we have seen to date. Everyone has a part to play in the overall picture and it is through these people that the business has grown and continues to grow and develop. Now into our fifth wave of apprentices, we continue to see this as a fundamental route for joining our business and learning new and important skills, not just for work, but for life in general.

Adapting to change: The effects of the tragic Grenfell disaster are still being felt and have had a significant impact on many markets, including the supply of building products within our sector. At Superior, we have gone to great lengths to ensure that our products are thoroughly tested and compliant with all current, and where possible, future legislation. We offer our customers the assurance of test data covering fire safety, sound performance, and structural integrity, supporting both minor and major projects with confidence.

superior
sections
roll forming innovation

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DRYWALL METAL SYSTEMS

Drywall Metal Systems • Metal Furring • Suspended Ceilings • Steel Framing (SFS) • Brick Channel Systems • PVCu Reinforcement • Bespoke Profiles

2019

As the business grew, additional land was acquired adjacent to the existing 30,000 ft² manufacturing space. This expansion created an extra 40,000 ft², bringing the total manufacturing space to 70,000 ft². The continuation of full operations during this major expansion was extremely challenging. However, at every hurdle, the team prevailed, and we are incredibly proud of the results.



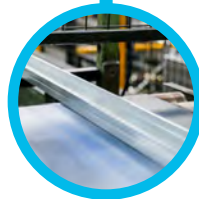
The business negotiated and won a major supply contract with a major "blue-chip" construction products manufacturer to allow them to repatriate a large part of their UK volumes and support their ambitious multi-year growth plans.

2022



We are proud to report the turnover has grown by a staggering £27.1m in 16 years to £29.8m.

During COVID-19, the business was unfortunately scaled back due to Government restrictions. However, was proud to support the construction of the Nightingale hospitals and the subsequent rebuilding of trade.



Further opportunities for expansion were identified, and the business expanded further into the Steel Framing Systems (SFS) sector. The business is now able to offer full design and technical support alongside our ability to supply SFS in market-leading lead-times.



2016

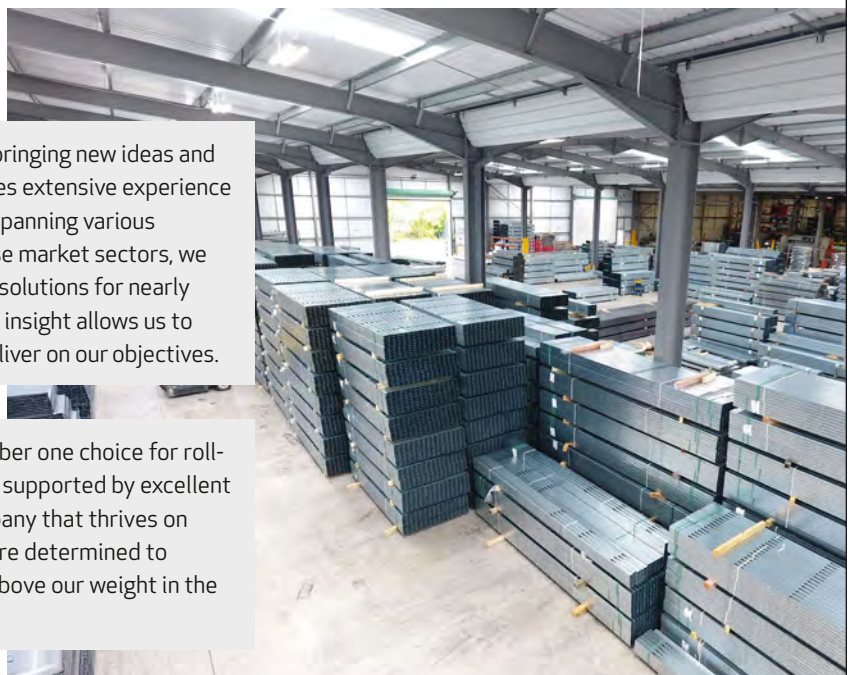


2020

2023

New ideas and innovation: We are committed to bringing new ideas and innovative products to market. Our team possesses extensive experience in roll forming, with complimentary backgrounds spanning various manufacturing industries. Operating across diverse market sectors, we have specific knowledge of potential roll-forming solutions for nearly every business. This combination of expertise and insight allows us to seize unrivalled opportunities and successfully deliver on our objectives.

Our goal: We will continue to strive to be the number one choice for roll-formed profiles across a broad range of markets, supported by excellent customer service and on-time delivery. As a company that thrives on challenges, when others say it can't be done, we are determined to deliver solutions. We have a history of punching above our weight in the industry and continue to do so.



ENHANCING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: THE IMPORTANCE OF ACOUSTIC SOLUTIONS

We explore with FIS members why getting the acoustic environment right is crucial in creating an optimal learning space in educational buildings.

Research has consistently shown that poor acoustics can significantly hinder students' ability to focus, understand speech, and engage in learning activities. Reverberation and background noise can disrupt communication between teachers and students, leading to decreased speech intelligibility and increased cognitive load.

Anna Dawson, Head of Global Sales and Marketing at Soundtect, and **Simon Humphrey**, Technical Manager at OWA, told David Crowson, Editor, why acoustic performance is one of the most important considerations when choosing interior building products for educational buildings. They emphasised the importance of understanding regulations such as Building Bulletin 93 (BB93), which provides the acoustic performance standards for schools in the UK, and ensuring that proper acoustic treatments are implemented.



Anna Dawson, Head of Global Sales and Marketing at Soundtect

Anna, said: "Drawing from my personal journey in the world of acoustics, I understand the critical role that sound plays in our children's classrooms. When my youngest son was struggling to hear his teacher,

I had the opportunity to experience firsthand the issue of long reverberation time in the classroom, leading to increased sound levels, and (luckily) subsequently solve the issue. It's not just about the structure and creativity of a space - the sound matters too.

"Good acoustics in schools are essential for improved speech intelligibility, as clear communication is vital for effective teaching and learning. Proper acoustic treatments using absorbant products reduce reverberation and background noise, making it easier for students to hear and understand their teachers. Additionally, good acoustics enhance concentration by creating a quieter environment that helps students focus better on their tasks, leading to improved academic performance. Furthermore, better acoustic environments contribute to the overall wellbeing of both

students and teachers by reducing stress and fatigue, creating a more pleasant and productive atmosphere.

"School rooms, sports halls, libraries, and other spaces rarely have soft furnishings. With the increase in popularity of hard, easy-to-clean flooring comes an increase in issues with noise and poor acoustics."

Anna went on to explain how we can address some of these challenges in schools by adding acoustic treatments and understanding Building Bulletin 93 (BB93).

Add acoustic treatments

These can offer immediate relief from reverberant sound. Both walls and ceilings can be fully utilised to grab those sound waves and turn the rooms back into usable areas quietly and confidently. Even existing buildings can add this all-important addition as a retrofit.

Acoustic ceiling systems, baffles or rafts are an excellent way to utilise often-overlooked ceiling space, transforming it from a blank canvas into a functional and aesthetically pleasing element. Whilst acoustic hanging screens are a highly effective way to partition off quiet areas in large open plan spaces. Acoustic panels can

also be designed as decorative wall features that enhance the educational environment.

Understanding Building Bulletin 93 (BB93) provides the acoustic performance standards for schools in the UK. These regulations specify the acceptable levels of reverberation, sound insulation, and indoor ambient noise in educational environments. BB93 first came into play in 2003, with an update in 2015. All new school buildings and redesigns must comply with BB93 acoustic standards.

Examples of acoustic treatments





The key features are:

- 1. Reverberation time and acoustic performance:** One of the fundamental aspects of BB93 is the regulation of reverberation time. This ensures that the acoustic environment is optimised for effective teaching, addressing issues related to poor acoustics and excessive noise that might have a detrimental effect on speech intelligibility.
- 2. Performance targets and minimum standards:** BB93 sets clear performance targets and minimum standards for ambient noise levels, sound insulation, and external noise levels in educational buildings. This ensures that new school buildings provide an environment conducive to effective learning.
- 3. Room usage and internal noise control:** Recognising the importance of different room usages, BB93 addresses internal noise control, emphasizing the significance of tailored acoustic design in areas such as classrooms, entrance halls, and other parts of a school.
- 4. Special Educational Needs (SEN):** BB93 recognizes the diverse needs of students, particularly those with special educational needs. The Building Bulletin underlines the importance of clear communication of speech, considering younger children and tailoring acoustic solutions to create inclusive learning environments.

By incorporating appropriate acoustic treatments early in the design phase, you can ensure BB93 compliance and create an optimal learning environment.

Investing in good acoustics is investing in better learning outcomes. By incorporating Soundtect's acoustic solutions into your school projects, you can create environments that support students' academic success and wellbeing.

www.soundtect.com



Simon Humphrey
Technical Manager
at OWA

Schools. It is important to choose a ceiling system that offers the correct balance between sound absorption and sound attenuation. As the acoustic requirements will depend on the use of the room, more than one ceiling system may be required across the project as classrooms, communal spaces, sports halls or specific rooms such as those for music lessons or quiet study, will each need to be considered", said Simon.

Mineral fibre ceiling tiles

Simon explained that the use of suspended ceiling systems and acoustic mineral fibre ceiling tiles is a cost-effective option. These tiles, which may feature a uniform, painted, textured visible surface can be demounted and reinstalled as needed to give service access.

"Acoustic ceiling design and choosing mineral or metal tiles are an important consideration. As mentioned by Anna the requirements are outlined in Building Bulletin 93,

Acoustic Design of

Also, they are easy to source and replace if they become damaged. However, some mineral ceiling tiles have a high formaldehyde or chemical content which can contribute to Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) being released into the air. It's important to maintain good air quality and a comfortable interior environment within education settings, so any ceiling tiles specified should demonstrate compliance with BS EN 13964 which outlines the best practice requirements and test methods for suspended ceilings. A key part of this is clause 4.5.2 which relates to the formaldehyde content of ceiling tiles.

Metal ceiling tiles

Although slightly more expensive as an initial outlay, metal ceiling tiles offer exceptional durability which can help reduce long-term maintenance costs. Constructed from robust metal such as galvanised steel or aluminium, perforated metal ceiling tiles are fitted with a sound absorbing fleece backing to achieve class C as standard. An optional class A acoustic pad will effectively maximise sound absorption and the tiles are available in a range of perforation patterns. Investing in metal ceiling tiles can also help meet sustainability targets. As well as looking for ceiling tiles that have a high recycled content, embodied carbon should also be considered and it is worth partnering with a manufacturer that utilises low carbon steel which is produced using cleaner, renewable energy.

www.owa-ceilings.co.uk

FIS Technical Director, **Joe Cilia** added that Acousticians should be employed as part of the design team as early as possible to ensure that the correct balance between absorption and reflection is achieved in classrooms to ensure that the students are able to hear clearly what is being said by the person teaching.

FIS has a number of guides on the subject which are available:

www.thefis.org/membership-hub/publications/specifiers-guides/ceilingsandacousticabsorbers/

www.thefis.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/FIS-Acoustic-Guide-2015.pdf

www.thefis.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Specifying-Acoustic-absorbers-where-they-will-be-installed-against-a-wall.pdf



Roll of Honour: The Winners of the 2024 Training Awards

RECOGNISING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHIN OUR SECTOR

The Training Awards are a collaboration between FIS and the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers to recognise achievement and excellence in plastering and interior systems.

The Training Awards Lunch was held on 5 December at Plaisterers' Hall in London. The event celebrated the achievements of apprentices and students who have exceeded expectations, training delivery by colleges and training providers, training delivery by a FIS member company, mentors, and others who have supported sector training, rising stars

forging careers in the sector, and lifetime contributions to sector training.

Guest speaker Mark Millar, a well-known personality from prime-time TV show DIY SOS, led the proceedings, in which winners across eleven categories were announced.

The judges said: "It was a privilege to be a member of the judging panel for this year's

Training Awards. The standard of entries across all categories was incredibly high, each supported with very positive endorsements from students, colleagues, and employers.

"Regardless of their final positions, all nominees should be proud of their individual achievements and take heart from the comments of their peers, supervisors, managers, and tutors.

"Congratulations to all nominees - we wish you all the very best for the future. Our sector is in good hands!"

Lifetime achievement

Winner - Wayne Chappelow, Leeds College of Building

Following a successful career as a plasterer, Wayne has spent more than 25 years with Leeds College of Building (LCB). He works tirelessly to ensure qualifications are fit for purpose - with IFATE to develop standards in plastering; with City & Guilds and NOCNs developing qualifications and writing exam questions; in construction T-level groups; and now with CITB developing a competency plastering standard. Wayne also supports competitors for SkillBuild, creating a dedicated role for this at LCB. Wayne ensures all programmes comply with awarding bodies and college policy. As a designated safeguarding officer, he ensures all students are treated safely and fairly. He is a member of many industry groups, part of a CITB working group on modern methods of construction, and supports the West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges on net zero/sustainability.

Apprentice of the Year - Plastering

Winner - Paige Martin, Drywall Contracts

Originally envisaging a career in the beauty sector, Paige had a change of heart after her mum struggled to find anyone to do some building work. "I realised there was lots of work available and wanted to know how to get into a trade," Paige recalls.

After training Paige took up an opportunity with Drywall Contracts on the Windsor Olympus Academy site. Arriving early every day during her work experience, she showed such enthusiasm and promise that she was offered a three-year plastering apprenticeship starting in April 2023.

Runner up - Newton Robinson, Andrew J Winner Plastering

Runner up - Oliver Berwick, Decorative & Ornamental Plastering

Professional Apprentice of the Year

Winner - Jake Jones, Measom Dryline

Although only three years into his six-year apprenticeship, Jake has developed a lot with Measom, managing his own projects and achieving first-class results at university. Jake's work at Measom links with his university modules. He has also attended a contract training CPD course through work, giving him real-life experience, and happily volunteers for anything.

Runner up - Ben Holden, OCL Facades

Runner up - Michael Dillon, OCL London

Student of the Year – Plastering

Winner - Alicia Johnson, City of Liverpool College

Alicia was the only woman among 23 men starting the Level 2 diploma course last year, but she took it in her stride. She was awarded Plasterer of the Month within her first few weeks, scored highly in her exams, and in January completed a week's work experience with subcontractor SAL, in partnership with Morgan Sindall. Feedback from SAL and Morgan Sindall lauded her hardworking approach, resilience and friendly nature.

Runner up - Ruby Hillary, Coleg Llandrillo

Runner up - Tyler Davies-Brown, The College Merthyr Tydfil

Apprentice/Student of the Year – Interior Systems

Winner - Shaun McKenna, Errigal Contracts (student)

From his first week at Errigal, Shaun stood out as someone determined to succeed. He achieved his CSCS, CSR, and Irish Safe Pass accreditation within his first two weeks. At the end of his first year, he had completed his Level 2 diploma in drylining and also now has his NVQ Level 2 in interior systems. And despite being a shy 18-year-old, Shaun now mentors other apprentices and is working towards site supervision.

Runner up - Jason Russell, Measom Dryline (apprentice)

Runner up - Jacob Milsom, Tapper Interiors (apprentice)

College/Training Provider of the Year – Small organisations

Winner - Carlisle College

Carlisle College's achievements have been welcomed.

DMB Building, which has one apprentice and two more starting, says: "They make having an apprentice easy. The apprentices have passed their courses with flying colours, a lot of the time early, which is mostly down to the staff at Carlisle College."

GA Wilson Plastering Contractors has also built up a strong relationship with the college over the past few years, enrolling all its apprentices in the solid plastering apprenticeship course.

Runner up - Craven College

College/Training Provider of the Year – Large organisations

Winner - NPTC Group of Colleges, South Wales

Josh Hartson completed his plastering Level 3 NVQ at NPTC four years ago and has since started his own business. He said: "I believe the training at NPTC stood me in good stead, with lessons on how to quote for jobs, tender for big projects, and complete schemes of work down to the smallest detail!"

Runner up - Llandrillo College, Rhos on Sea

Training Champion Award

Winner - Kate Kerlake, carringtonLIME Heritage Skills Training

Kate has proved herself a force to be reckoned with. The business started out as a building company but after realising there was no training route for lime plasterers, Kate decided to create a route. After a few years of running short courses, Kate left her job at a local heritage site to work on training full-time. In the past three years, the firm has gone from eight courses a year to at least one a week. An accredited training organisation, it offers qualifications in lime and, as a not-for-profit, has invested in training bursaries.

FIS member training programme

Winner - Zentia

Zentia training programmes aim to enhance core competencies, leadership skills, and technical abilities. Every new starter attends the Zentia Installation School for at least one day and thereafter takes continuous learning and development, including product refresher courses to suit. The school, a previous winner of the FIS Member Training Programme of the Year, has trained thousands of ceiling contractors since the 1990s. It also provides one-day courses for experienced ceiling installers as part of the Pinnacle by Zentia Partnership scheme, after which participants become a Pinnacle Supervisor and their business a Pinnacle Approved Partner.

To read more about the awards and the category winner's and runner's up visit: https://heyzine.com/flip-book/FIS_Training_Award_Winners_2024

Rising Star Award

Winner - Edward Tapper, Tapper Interiors

When Tapper Interiors became principal contractor on the £2.8m project for Lotus Cars in 2022, it turned to 30-year-old Ed Tapper to be site manager. Yet Lotus' David Aldcroft was in no doubt about the choice: "Ed proved to be an exceptional manager for the wide array of trades and skills on site. Right from the start, Ed was first on site and last to leave. He was exceptionally knowledgeable, quick to respond, managed the full team, and adhered to all legislative and contractual needs."



Formula Trophy – recognising contributions to the development and long-term future of fibrous and GRG plasterwork

Winner - South Lanarkshire College

South Lanarkshire College (SLC) prides itself on delivering fibrous plasterwork to all plastering students, even as this type of training falls away in the UK. SLC trains all second-year apprentices in fibrous. Many thrive on this and move on to the advanced craft programme in their third or fourth year. SLC is investing in workshop upgrades to facilitate this growth, helping students with geometry, mathematics, creativity, and organisational skills. In Scotland the apprenticeship framework comprises the Professional Development Award, taught and assessed in college, and the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) competence-based units, assessed on-site.

SPONSORS



SAINT-GOBAIN



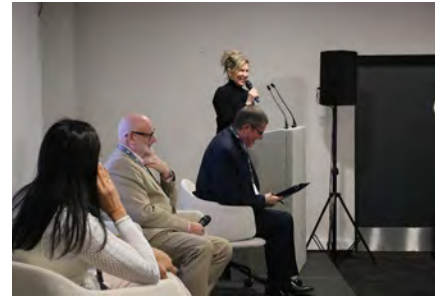
SAINT-GOBAIN



THE PLAISTERS' CHARITY



Attendees and inspirational speakers at the 2024 FIS Conference



FIS AT THE WORKSPACE DESIGN SHOW

FIS has partnered with the UK's leading workspace interiors exhibition, which is returning to the Business Design Centre in London from 26 – 27 February. At the event, the FIS Conference will take place over two days and will include the announcement of the winners of the FIS Innovation Awards.

The Workspace Design Show gathers businesses, architects, designers, and end-user occupiers from around the world to immerse themselves in a world of innovative design. The show provides an opportunity to learn about the latest trends and best practices in workspace design, gain valuable insights, exchange ideas, and network with like-minded individuals.

Whether you are a designer, architect, or business owner, you can connect with others who share your passion for creating inspiring workspaces.

What to look out for at the show

- Listen to insights from 135+ inspirational speakers across four conferences including the FIS Conference, Workspace Design Talks, Occupiers Forum, and Sustainability Talks
- Network with over 5,000 architects, interior designers, developers, end-user occupiers, coworking companies, fit-out companies and developers
- Relax and catch up with old friends and new ones over a beer, cocktail, or prosecco

along with some canapes at the Workspace Design Party drinks reception

- Discover more than 500 product innovations in furniture, lighting, acoustics, and surfaces that are transforming workplaces
- Be inspired by experiential features brought to life by some of the region's most creative design minds

FIS Conference

The two-day FIS Conference will bring together speakers from across the commercial interiors industry to discuss key issues and current trends shaping workspaces' future. Day one will focus on Creating Spaces Together and will look at

how the market is evolving, the essentials of a modern office, and collaboration. Day two will focus on Sustainable Spaces, discussing good practice measures, measuring CAT A and CAT B impact, and optimising reuse.

FIS Innovation Awards

The FIS Innovation Awards aim to debunk the myth that construction is not an innovative sector. The awards recognise outstanding innovation in the finishes and interiors sector across three categories, Product – Fit-Out and FF&E, Sustainability, and Digital. Winners will be announced on 26 February, join us to see the winners and vote live for your overall Innovation of the Year.

More information on the FIS Conference and Innovation Awards is available at:

www.thefis.org/membership-hub/fis-awards/innovation/fis-conference-workspaceshow-2025

You can register now to receive a complimentary pass and attend Workspace Design Show at: <https://workspaceshow.co.uk>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



Business Design Centre, London

FIS Conference

Business Design Centre, London
26-27 February

Workspace Design Show

Business Design Centre, London
26-27 February

FIS Awards Lunch

Royal Lancaster Hotel, London
5 June

FIS Scottish Awards Lunch

Voco Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow
12 September

For further information of these events visit: www.thefis.org/events

GRAHAM selected for fit-out job at the Berkshire Golf Club



Concept drawing of the terrace dining area at the Berkshire Golf Club

GRAHAM Interior Fit-Out division has secured the contract for an extensive refurbishment project at The Berkshire Golf Club.

The project will involve a comprehensive refurbishment of the clubhouse, including modernising the principal front-of-house spaces, updating back-of-house facilities and infrastructure, and enhancing staff accommodation. These improvements are designed to align with the club's commitment to providing an exceptional experience and services for its members and guests.

Neil Dickson, Interior Fit-Out Contracts Director at GRAHAM, commented: "Securing the refurbishment project for The Berkshire, one of the UK's premier golf clubs, is a great result for GRAHAM. Our objective is to modernise the club's facilities, ensuring they meet the evolving needs of its members and guests. By upgrading both the clubhouse and the infrastructure, we are making sure that every aspect of the club is fit for purpose, combining comfort and functionality with the highest standards of quality. We look forward to collaborating closely with all stakeholders to bring this vision to life."

www.graham.co.uk

Vacancy: FIS Technical Projects Manager

Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS) is recruiting a Technical Projects Manager to support its ongoing transformation from a vital knowledge hub to a modern information provider and dynamic technical authority. This is an exciting new role and opportunity to make a difference in a growing organisation that will support transformation in the £10 billion finishes and interiors sector.

Outline of the role

Key to the role is working with the FIS Team, Members, relevant stakeholders and specifiers to develop guidance and associated training to support compliance and ongoing business improvement. The role will be pivotal to supporting the delivery of the FIS Product Process People Quality

Framework and ensuring that the members have accessible quality information effectively targeted.

The individual will also provide support to the FIS Team in supporting the FIS Working Groups and projects that are identified through these groups to ensure that the FIS is delivering value and supporting change within the sector.

The role requires close working with members and site visits in order to conduct vetting.

The candidate

The candidate will require technical knowledge of construction and particularly key packages within the fit-out process. The key is a demonstrable ability to break

complex problems/information down and communicate simply to all parts of the supply chain. The individual will be expected to have direct experience working in or closely with contracting businesses operating in the finishes and interiors sector.

Remuneration: TBA

Closing date: 9 January 2025

Please send your CV and covering letter/ email along with salary expectations to janeknight@thefis.org.

To find out more

Visit: <https://tinyurl.com/rb335kvk>

Call: FIS CEO, Iain McIlwee

0121 707 0077

Saint-Gobain Interior Solutions launches a new content platform



Saint-Gobain Interior Solutions, through its brands British Gypsum and Isover, is launching a new platform for the construction industry called Building Better.

Building Better is all about constructive content. It is an educational, informative,

and entertaining platform designed to help, guide, and encourage architects, specifiers, housebuilders, and building contractors as well as the wider construction sector. It aims to provide the industry with a funnelled source of knowledge and information, enabling conversations around sustainability, traceability, diversity, design and technology, skill-building, and beyond.

Found on YouTube, the weekly videos will provide insights, ideas, and inspiration to new technologies and new techniques.

There will be tips, tools, and techniques to make every space a success.

The first episode focuses on the skills gap and features CITB Customer Engagement Manager, **Anthony Frayne**, who said: "We are really happy to have worked on the project. It is vital that more people understand that a career in construction is enjoyable, highly skilled, well paid, and provides genuine progression opportunities that other sectors do not. People don't know what they don't know and the more aware they are of what a career in construction actually entails and the rewards they can get."

You can subscribe on YouTube and Spotify to stay up to date with future episodes as they are released, which will explore other challenges within the construction industry. You can also follow the British Gypsum and Isover social media channels or sign up for the newsletter on the Building Better Hub, which is also home to other blogs and articles: www.saint-gobain.co.uk/building-better-hub

To read the story in full visit:

www.specfinish.co.uk/saint-gobain-interior-solutions-launches-a-new-content-platform

The "Girls can Build" program has won the Inspiring Change in Education Award

In the October 2024 issue, we told you about OCL's pioneering "Girls can Build" programme. We can now report that the programme has won the 2024 Inspiring Change in Education category at the Supply Chain Sustainability School (UK) Inspiring Change Awards.

The programme, which started in May, involved six primary schools across Basildon. Over the course of eight weeks, women from the OCL team conducted 13 sessions, including assemblies and classroom activities. Girls in years three to six had the opportunity to wear hard hats and hi-vis vests as they took on roles such as Project Managers, leading a bridge-building challenge. They also participated in PPE challenges, job role activities, and interactive Q&A sessions with the OCL team. This initiative not only highlights the possibilities within the construction industry but also aims to plant the seeds of curiosity and ambition in young girls, paving the way for a more diverse future in construction.

Varsha Patel, Marketing and Communications Lead at OCL, said: "This award gives huge recognition to the women at OCL behind the programme, which has already inspired so many girls. We were very proud that the room was in awe of our programme and the positivity shared with us was incredible."

The Inspiring Change Awards recognise organisations in the sector that can demonstrate they value and promote inclusion and diversity in the workplace and wider community. The awards highlight organisations that understand the broad scope of diversity, nurture a culture of fairness, inclusion, and respect, and have taken active steps to ensure equal opportunity in how they operate. The Inspiring Change in Education Award celebrates organisations and projects that have, within the past 2 years, implemented an initiative to work with schools or colleges to help address educational inequalities by encouraging young people to enhance their skills and achieve their potential.



(L-R) Varsha Patel, Marketing and Communications Lead and Fiona Wells, Senior Estimator at OCL

To find out more about the "Girls can Build" programme visit:

www.ocl.london/girls-can-build-programme-inspires-over-700-school-girls-in-eight-weeks

www.ocl.london

Enhancing risk management: Exclusive insurance solutions

FIS has announced it has partnered with Construction Shield, a leader in insurance consulting to offer specialist insurance advice to its members.

Michelle Armstrong, Head of Membership at FIS said: "This collaboration opens up a wealth of opportunities for FIS members to assess their current coverage efficiently. With the expertise of Construction Shield, FIS members can now evaluate the effectiveness of their existing insurance policies and identify areas for improvement. Not only can they gain insights into their current coverage, but they can also have access to alternative quotes that



could better suit their specific needs.

"In our ongoing effort to keep costs at a minimum for our members, we are excited to announce that FIS will waive any commission fees associated with this service. This means that members can benefit from Construction Shield's expertise without worrying about additional costs. Instead, the savings generated from this partnership will be rebated directly to the member."

To find out more visit: www.thefis.org/membership-hub/memberbenefits/construction-shield



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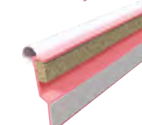
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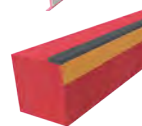
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