

SPEC FINISH

FIS

The magazine of FIS
representing the finishes
and interiors sector

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Advanced Research Centre,
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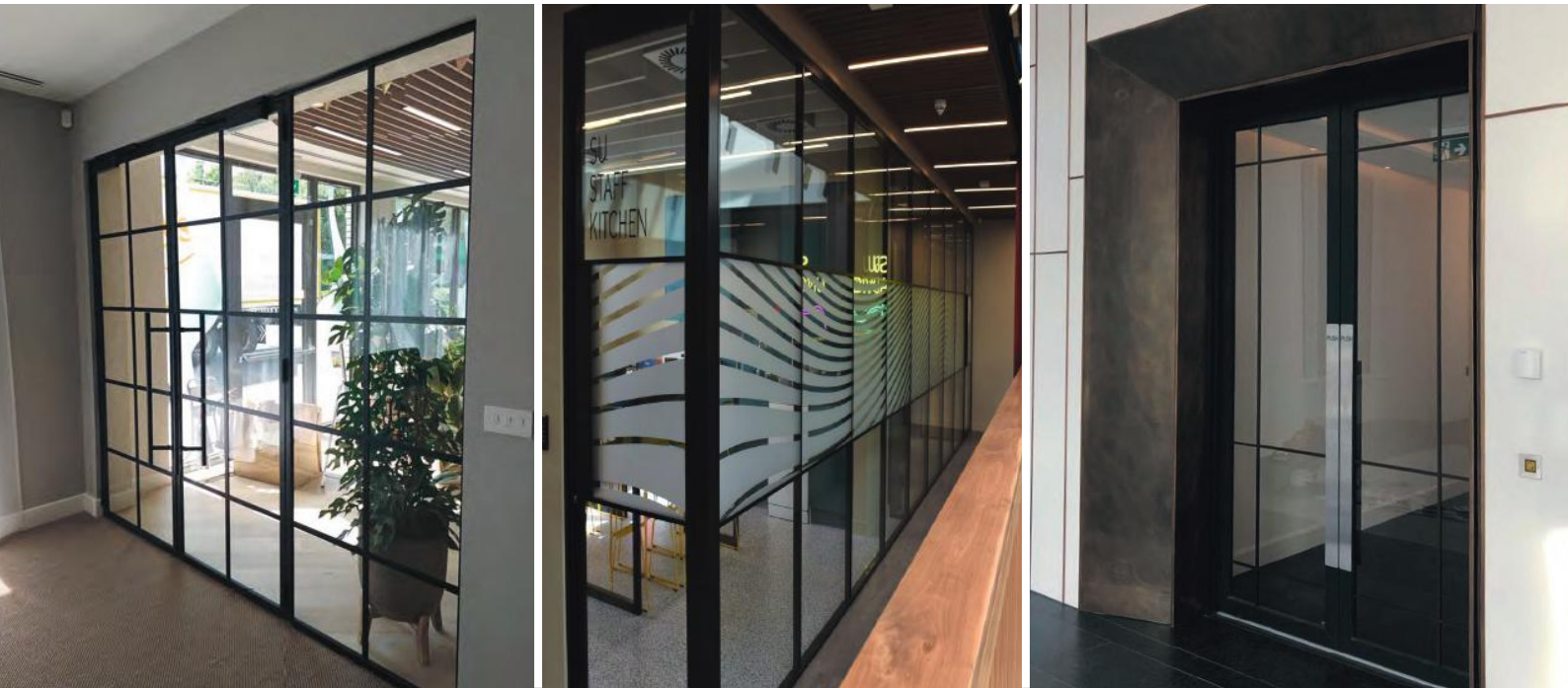


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INSOLVENCY

NEW BEGINNING

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Your credit facility has been withdrawn – is it time to close the UK Specialist Bank of Construction

The number of insolvencies in construction is a worry – over 4,000 businesses in the 12 months to April 2023. This is nearly a quarter higher than the previous year and a staggering 140% up on the year to April 2021.

It is significant too where winding up orders are coming from. Petitions from leading builders' merchants increased by some 400% in 2022/23. There is a credit crunch in construction that is hiding in plain sight.

I write this in a week when three more main contractors entered various stages of insolvency. The statements are similar stating inflation, delays, challenges on key jobs and the cash dried up. It is a horrible time for all employees and the collateral damage is magnified in the supply chain. Specialist contractors on live projects face potentially heavy losses, uncertainty on whether they will be retained on ongoing projects and unreleased retention monies from others are now being used to pay Administrators.

When Lane End Developments, a Cheshire-based affordable housebuilder collapsed in April, the Administrator reported they owed 412 unsecured creditors a total of £11.8m. With Henry Construction it is likely to be even worse and may be the awful part is that none of the money they borrowed from the specialist contractors (almost invariably SMEs) was secured!

The true extent of this unsecured loan from the supply chain is significant. The first application date is unlikely to be 30 or 60 days into the job, which means that, even

in the rare event of being on 30-day terms and paid on time, a specialist contractor has typically offered an unsecured loan equivalent to 90 days of labour and materials. This cash position is offset in part (the material part) by using builders merchants credit and at times extending this further by using a charge card. But, salaries need to be paid, labour is still often paid weekly and ultimately all the bills need to be settled! Specialist contractors live on a knife edge of cash, expected to fund the first stage of virtually all jobs, oftentimes jobs for major developers, multi-nationals (including Banks!) and the Government itself.

This isn't new. Carilion was one of the biggest failings in UK corporate history, it decimated the supply chain. It isn't new, but that doesn't mean it is right! Politicians talked of lessons learned after Carilion, but nothing has changed and the risks have worsened. Beyond the obvious risk of fixed prices in the current climate, inflation means the jobs cost more and more and an "upfront loan" is required. At the same time, the cost of any capital (by virtue of rising interest rates) is also higher. COVID and inflation have depleted working capital and the availability of traditional credit has reduced and credit insurance has all but dried up for most.

We talk of transformation in construction driven by investment in digital tools, process and people, but we expect most of this out of SMEs who are appointed late and sit on a knife edge. It is not a unreceptive or lazy supply chain preventing change, it

IAIN MCILWEE
Chief executive
Finishes and
Interiors Sector



is an industry starved of cash and beset with risk. The Building Safety Act 2022 will help change culture, it will put pressure on more responsible procurement, but it is not enough. To deliver wholesale change across the market we need to revisit the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (aka the Construction Act). Through the Act we need to look again at how we capitalise construction with deposit, outlaw inappropriate risk dumping, place more emphasis on Project Bank Accounts (which have had a positive impact on public sector jobs in Scotland) and maybe consider licensing and bonds for main contractors to ensure those working on subcontracted jobs are protected from failings up the chain.

To unlock transformation and support a better sector, the Act needs to ensure SME specialist contractors are resourced to succeed, not abused and used as The United Free Bank of Specialist Contractors. As we continue our focus on procurement practices and head towards the next General Election, this is the big focus now of the FIS Policy Team, the UK Specialist Bank of Construction needs to close.

Welcome

SPEC FINISH

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WELCOME

TO THE JULY ISSUE OF SPECFINISH

I believe it's safe to say that no one does pomp and ceremony quite like the British. Charles III and his wife, Camilla, were coronated as king and queen of the United Kingdom and the other Commonwealth realms. As I mentioned when Queen Elizabeth II passed away, I know the Monarchy can be very divisive however, we again witnessed an historic event, got a day off to celebrate and Take That 'We're back for good!'

In May, I attended the informative FIS Industry Day: Commercial Fit-Out and D&B which was kindly hosted by Hill Dickinson at their offices in The Broadgate Tower, London. The important topics on the agenda were Sustainability and Building Regulations – Compliance and Reputation. The morning's presentations focused on reducing the industry's environmental impact, re-use in fit-out, re-use - the art of the possible and then finished with logistic and storage solutions for the circular economy.

In the afternoon the presentations were the Regulatory backdrop, competence, quality issues, design considerations and common concerns in the fit-out process, digital information management, BIM and the Golden Thread and concluded the day with improving the fit-out process, commissioning contracts and procurement.

The presentations and subsequent breakout sessions were well received by the attendees and some of the important points that were raised and discussed, at times passionately, will be covered in this and future issues of SpecFinish. You can read more about the day by visiting:

www.thefis.org/industry-day-on-demand

On page 14 of this issue, we discuss the lack of understanding of a Digital Twin and how it can improve BIM and avoid tragedies like Grenfell and achieve net-zero ambitions.

Related to the re-use in fit-out and the art of the possible presentations, on page 16 we bring you the great CAT A debate. You will hear what some industry experts think about this divisive subject.

We are also keen to hear your thoughts on this topic so invite you to complete an online survey: <https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90570592/The-Great-Cat-A-Debate>.

Three FIS members who are acoustic experts, discuss acoustic comfort, how to measure acoustic performance to guarantee results and how the acoustic environment can support wellbeing in interior design. To read more go to page 24.

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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Community news

BCIS appoints chairman in support of the mission to manage construction costs and carbon

The Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) has officially appointed a new chairman Colin Smith, who will support the business's expansion as it helps the construction industry to manage costs, reduce carbon and mitigate risk.

Smith joins BCIS with 40 years of experience working in companies which specialise in providing data to the construction industry and has previously served as a chairman, CEO and director for market-leading technology businesses in the UK, Germany, the USA and Australia.

Operating mainly in the role of chairman in recent years, he has held C-level positions in market-leading technology businesses since the early 1990s.

His role will include guiding BCIS on its journey as it helps the construction industry to make more informed choices, backed by data and forecasts, in terms of carbon and building costs, as well as launching it into global markets.

Colin said: "The business is in a unique position of holding the data the construction industry needs to reveal the best choices in terms of building costs and reducing carbon.

"There is a growing desire to reduce our carbon footprint and ultimately to save the planet. BCIS can and will help the industry to achieve this. To be able to play a part in reducing our impact on the environment is very close to my heart as I consider the legacy we will leave for future generations.

"Thanks to backing from private equity investment, BCIS now has the firepower to build on its services, expand into new markets and offer new products".

www.bcis.co.uk



BCIS Chairman Colin Smith

Plasterers and interior finishers across Great Britain are being warned about the hidden dangers associated with asbestos

The warning comes as part of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Asbestos and You campaign targeting tradespeople about the personal risks from asbestos that still exist in properties across the country today.

Around 5,000 people a year die from asbestos related illnesses and asbestos can still be found in buildings built or refurbished before the year 2000. But HSE is warning despite the ban on its use, many buildings still contain asbestos, and it is still a serious risk to anyone exposed to it at any age.

Tim Beaumont, HSE's acting head of construction policy sector, said: "Asbestos can be found in things like Artex, cement boards under eaves, garage roofs, old bath panels, boiler houses and fires and even mortar between bricks can contain asbestos.

"There is no known safe level of asbestos exposure but that's not to say it can't be managed safely.

"All tradespeople should make sure they know the basics about identifying asbestos. Before carrying out any construction work, there's a legal requirement to identify whether asbestos is present and could be disturbed.

"Younger tradespeople need to know the dangers behind asbestos as it could affect them in later life like it is affecting older tradespeople now."

Asbestos is only dangerous if not maintained in a safe condition or if physically disturbed without the right measures in place to control exposure to fibres.

Iain McIlwee, FIS chief executive, said: "Providing information about managing asbestos for plasterers, dryliners, ceiling fixers and all other trades working on the interior system of a building, is as important today than it ever was.

"We welcome and support HSE's campaign 'Asbestos & You' to highlight that despite being banned in the UK, asbestos has not gone away. For example, removing old plaster, spray coatings on walls and beams, partition walls, loose fill insulation, textured walls, and ceilings (Artex) are still commonly found in buildings today, often when dealing with refurbishment projects."

From the 1950s until 1999, asbestos containing materials were used extensively in the construction and maintenance of buildings in Great Britain.

When materials that contain asbestos are disturbed or damaged, fibres are released into the air. If these fibres are inhaled, they can cause serious diseases such as mesothelioma, asbestos related lung cancer, asbestosis, and pleural thickening. These diseases will not affect you immediately as they often take a long time to develop, but once diagnosed, it is often too late to do anything.



HSE's Asbestos and You campaign

It can take 20 to 30 years before symptoms appear. Symptoms include shortness of breath, persistent cough, wheezing, extreme tiredness, pain in your chest or shoulder and in more advanced cases, swollen fingertips.

If asbestos cannot be safely managed, it should be removed by a licensed asbestos contractor. Where present, asbestos should be closely managed by those responsible for the building.

To find out more visit:
Asbestos and You campaign:
<https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/asbestos/>

HSE's website:
<https://tinyurl.com/2hcrubjn>

Independent review of the construction product testing regime



In April we saw the publication of the independent review of the construction product testing regime which was announced by Government in April 2021 and was led by Paul Morrell OBE and Anneliese Day KC.

The purpose of the review was to identify any potential weaknesses in the system and make recommendations for improvement.

It undertook a critical assessment of the system for testing and certifying construction products and how the system could be strengthened to provide confidence that construction products are safe and perform as labelled and marked.

It is a wide ranging report and recognises contributions from FIS. Key points to draw out include:

- Concerns remain over fragmentation and there is a greater focus required on how products work within systems and understanding responsibility
- Recommendations around the definition of "safety critical products", to include; Fire resisting construction (e.g. in compartment walls), including glazing, Class A1 material for shaft construction, Fire doors and doorsets, door closers, cavity barriers, fire resisting ceilings, fire-stopping
- Regulations to be tightened to ensure all products have a "general safety requirement" and are embraced by the Construction Products Regulation, requiring them to report consistently on essential characteristics through the adoption of the Declaration of Performance process.
- The need to strengthen enforcement and the importance of getting behind the Code for Construction Products Information
- The call for a Standard to support the assessment of performance to augment testing and scope

The report also touches on the suggestion of licensing for main contractors to help improve the safety culture.

You can view all the documents relating to the review by visiting: www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-the-construction-product-testing-regime

Project Happiness: Benchmarking Culture in Construction

Construction contributes £117 billion to the UK economy (6%) with 2.4 million jobs in the sector, 7% of the UK total. You are an important bunch!

According to the latest Construction Skills Network (CSN) report an extra 225,000 construction workers may be needed by 2027 to keep up with projections. This means the Greater London construction industry would have to increase current recruitment by 3,450 new workers each year to deliver expected projects, in addition to retaining its current workforce.

For the industry to meet increasing demand, it is imperative that construction leaders have useful and relevant data to inform their decisions around engagement, attraction and retention. Culture and employee engagement are crucial metrics for any construction company in the current climate.

For business leaders to be fully informed, they need access to up-to-date, sector specific benchmarking data relevant to size and location of their business. With this information leaders and employees can more accurately compare, and learn about the successes and challenges most applicable to them.

The Condor Collective has partnered with FIS on Project Happiness; to better understand the metrics around topics such as mental health, retention, apprenticeships, collaboration, communication and general happiness of the people and businesses that make up the fit-out sector.

How will Project Happiness help business leaders?

The benchmark data gathered in this process will inform business leaders of engagement within the fit-out sector, allowing leaders to make informed decisions on engagement and impact retention for their own teams.

All FIS members who participate and qualify will receive their own set of results against the benchmark data.

Employees, why participate?

We want to hear from as many employees working in the fit-out sector as possible on topics such as engagement, leadership, learning and development, collaboration and communication.

This mass data capture will provide a snapshot of how the sector approaches employee engagement, and from the insights we will be able to look at what can be improved not only to retain employees at a business level, but also to attract new people into fitout.

This is an opportunity for all employees to have a voice and a platform to report on how they feel their employer is performing and how they feel about the industry as a whole. The more people who participate, the clearer the picture we gain insights into.

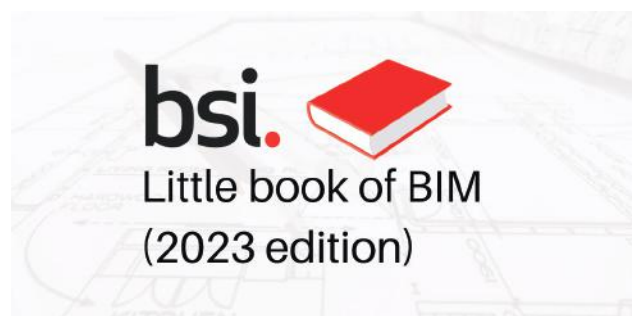
To register visit: <https://bit.ly/projecthappiness-FIS>

www.thecondorcollective.com

The BIM 2023 from BSI is ready to download

BSI has published its 2023 version of the Little Book of BIM.

This is a quick reference guide for the standards, definitions and terms commonly used in describing BIM and its related processes, as well as training and qualification pathways for all levels. The guide can be used by organisations across the supply chain.



To download a copy visit: <https://tinyurl.com/mthtrcyb>

WHAT IS COMPETENCE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Competency has been a major challenge for the building industry. To ensure you comply with The Building Safety Act and nurture and protect your employees and business it is crucial to focus on competency management which includes implementing a Competency Management Plan (CMP) or Framework. The benefits are clear for all to see.



Beena Nana, FIS Head of Skills and Training

Competence can be described as the combination of training, skills, experience, and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely. Other factors, such as attitude and physical ability can also affect someone's competence.

Competence can be defined as behaviours and technical attributes, where appropriate and can be a good performance indicator from an organisation to an individual of their expected areas and levels of performance.

A CMP can be useful to support a talent strategy and guide your practices in areas such as recruitment, talent development and performance management.

It is essential that an organisation communicates a CMP's purpose to its managers so that they have a shared understanding of expectations of skills and performance and can implement it effectively when making decisions and assessing performance. The framework should be a starting point to define these shared expectations of skills and performance but apply flexibly depending on the context of the role and individual development and aspirations.

The Building Safety Act and why competence matters

The Building Safety Act makes ground-breaking reforms to give residents and homeowners more rights, powers, and protections so that homes across the country are safer.

It delivers far-reaching protections for qualifying leaseholders from the costs associated with remediating historical building safety defects and an ambitious toolkit of measures that will allow those responsible for building safety defects to be held to account.

It overhauls existing regulations, creates lasting change and makes it clear how residential buildings should be constructed, maintained and made safe.

Competency has been a challenge for the building industry in the past. The Dame Judith Hackitt, review, described a fragmented industry of competing competency frameworks, making it difficult for installers to understand how to achieve good quality work.

Organisations must have appropriate management systems, processes, policies and resources.

It's also crucial that contractors recognise their role in supporting the upskilling of all groups, with particular support for craft groups.

The benefits of a CMP

There are many benefits of integrating elements of competency management and having a CMP or Framework. It can detail and identify what skills are needed to perform well in a specific role.

These include:

- **Increased productivity** - One of the main reasons workplaces integrate competency management into their procedures is for the increased productivity that can result from it. With competency management the organisation is able to match an employee's skills with specific tasks, ensuring that they assign jobs to people who have the qualifications to carry them out successfully and efficiently. Without the need for additional training, resources or guidance, overall productivity can increase substantially.
- **Better retention** - Retention is an important benefit of competency management, as it can make a significant difference in both the quality of staff and their chances of staying for an extended period. With competency management, managers can identify the exact skills necessary for succeeding in each role and match them with the qualities of their candidates. Recruiting the right people for a role means they're more

likely to succeed in their work and stay in their position.

- **Lower training costs** - Competency management can also reduce the costs associated with on-boarding and training new staff. Since competency management makes it possible for employers to select the best possible candidates for each role, they're also likely to need fewer training resources, as the new employees already have many of the qualifications and experience necessary for succeeding at their job. The higher retention rates that result from competency management can also save company funds, as organisations can spend less on outreach and recruitment and more on strengthening the skills of their current employees.
- **Room for growth** - Competency management doesn't limit employees to the skills or characteristics that helped them in being selected for their role, rather, it can give them the opportunity to expand their existing skill sets and expertise. The increase in motivation and success employees can experience with implementing competency management can also make them more likely to stay loyal to their employer, giving their organisation the ability to provide them with progression opportunities. Employees can optimise their skills in one sector and move on to mastering another, allowing them to explore different roles and responsibilities within the sector.

Upskilling and Reskilling - Why it is important and how it links with competency

Upskilling is an important element of competency. Upskilling employees is when you provide team members with training to add to the skills they already use whilst at work. The aim here is to equip employees for additional tasks and responsibilities to prepare for career progression.

Reskilling also plays a big part, as it provides employees with the skills to pursue a new line of work. This works best when employees already have some of the skills required in their new role or some adjacent skills.

Upskilling and reskilling are important to employees as it provides opportunities to learn and move forward as things change and develop. By consistently refreshing knowledge, it enables them to remain prepared and proactive. They are also important to organisations as they are investing in the long-term retention of staff and empower themselves to prepare for fast-changing skills demands.

Upskilling is not only key to maintaining and growing productivity but is also essential for keeping employees engaged and interested. By promoting continued learning and development as part of its company culture, a business can boost employee job satisfaction, remain competitive and bring out the full potential of its existing workforce.

Flynn Interiors and Now Get Qualified

Two FIS members, Flynn Interiors and Now Get Qualified (NGQ) have demonstrated how they have been working together to support some of Flynn Interiors' workforce to achieve their respective NVQs (Upskilling).

All of Flynn Interiors operatives have successfully completed their NVQs in various specialisms such as Interior Systems – Drylining, Interior Systems – Finishing, Ceiling Fixing and Passive Fire Protection.

Flynn Interiors have valued the assistance NGQ has provided in relation to the scope of qualifications and pathways. Roisin Flynn, Office Manager at Flynn Interiors said: "Partnering with a training provider that is also a member of the FIS has helped us ensure that we are putting our staff through the correct qualifications to match their skill set. NGQ has been paramount in the success of upskilling our workforce and we will continue to work with them to reach a collective industry goal".

Both Flynn Interiors and NGQ have said one of the reasons this works so well is because the levels of communication between the



A candidate receives their induction

FIS and Competency Management Plans (CMP)

FIS has developed and published a competency management guide for organisations working in the finishes and interiors sector of the construction industry. The guide intends to provide examples and signposts to available information and assist organisations in improving quality and safety whilst ensuring they meet the requirements of legislation.

With the Building Safety Act, employers and organisations are facing challenges to retain highly skilled employees, in a competitive environment whilst improving performance and developing other qualities such as leadership. The Building Safety Act imposes a legal requirement on principal designers, principal contractors and anyone carrying out any design or building work to be competent.

Construction organisations will be required to prove they have a plan to manage competence before starting every stage of the work when it comes to higher risk buildings. A CMP will be key to progressing through the relevant gateways and ensuring the Building Safety Regulator can allow a project to proceed.

FIS has been working with My Professional Pass (MPP) to help support a universal approach to competency passports in the sector. The FIS Competency Passport system will store, retrieve, view and monitor training and qualification achievements of individuals and records of experience. Individuals registered with MPP, self-employed or directly employed can give organisations access to their records at: www.thefis.org/skills-hub/competency-passport

A training plan can be linked to the MPP platform to show the qualifications and achievements held by employees. The system can inform employees when mandatory training is due, record completed training and can store certificates of experience and video evidence of activities. The records belong to the individual and organisations need to ask individuals for access. MPP records can include job descriptions. To find out more visit:

www.thefis.org/skills-hub/competency

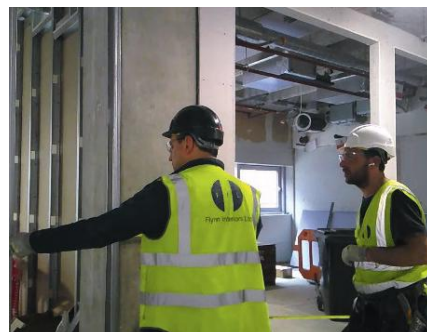


two are at a high level, which allows them to collaborate and be forthcoming.

Flynn Interiors understands the importance of upskilling the workforce and improving industry standards as a result. With this in mind, their partnership with NGQ has provided support to various operatives looking to become professionally recognised in their field.

They like to keep the process simple but effective and beneficial for their learners. To do this, they work together with the learners to identify the correct pathways for them, considering any prior learning and ensuring they utilise proof of competence, which creates an individual and fulfilling learning experience.

With the NVQs, they ensure it is fitting for the candidate and whilst they are undertaking



A candidate receiving on the job instruction

the course, Flynn Interiors and NGQ take care to ensure they are capturing their knowledge and understanding. They do this by building a portfolio of competence and evidence, to demonstrate their learnings.

Debbie Plosky, Director at Now Get Qualified said: "Flynn Interiors have the ideal approach to developing a competent workforce. They are supportive of their installers and engaging with our delivery team, making the process of OSAT work effectively".

Whilst it is important to improve the skills of the workforce and respond to skills gaps, Flynn Interiors and NGQ are keen to build high levels of quality into the learner experience. They want their learners to achieve their qualifications to a high standard, so keeping communication open between all involved is what they value. Before assessments take place, they sit down with learners to go through areas they may need to improve on, therefore, setting them up for success and how learners can see their progression.

Feedback from their learners has been positive and they have said how they valued the support received by Flynn Interiors and NGQ.

www.flynninteriors.co.uk
www.nowgetqualified.co.uk

LEADING THE WAY TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS

Two FIS members told **Flavie Lowres**, FIS Sustainability Champion what approaches they have taken to reduce their emissions as set out in the Green House Gas (GHG) Protocol.

In previous issues of SpecFinish, I have covered why it was important for organisations to start measuring and reducing their carbon emissions. In the May issue on page 10, I we looked at how emissions had been grouped under the definition of scope one, two and three as set out in the Green House Gas (GHG) Protocol. The GHG Protocol basically separates emissions from direct emissions (scope one e.g. the burning of fuel in a furnace on site), indirect emissions from energy (scope two e.g. the use of grid electricity) and all other indirect emissions (scope three e.g. emissions other than emissions that are a consequence of the organisation's actions). The GHG Protocol then helps categorise scope three into 15 sub-categories including: purchased goods and services, waste generated in operations, capital goods, business travel, employee commuting and end of life treatment of sold products¹. This is a useful approach to help identify and prioritise effort.

Following this article, SpecFinish approached two FIS members Willmott Dixon and Etex to understand their approaches to reducing their emissions.



Flavie Lowres
FIS Sustainability
Champion



WILLMOTT DIXON

James Upstill-Goddard, Sustainable Supply Chain Lead at Willmott Dixon provided some examples of the company's market-leading approach to sustainability.

James explained Willmott Dixon's Now or Never strategy commits to achieve net



James Upstill-Goddard, Sustainable Supply Chain Lead, Group Sustainability at Willmott Dixon

zero operational carbon across all new buildings and major refurbishments by 2030, extending to the supply chain by 2040. By the end of 2040, Willmott Dixon will also deliver all its new buildings and major refurbishments with net zero embodied carbon.

James said: "We have already made significant strides, reducing our absolute carbon emissions by 48% since 2018. This has been achieved by tackling our scope one emissions, including our site and office gas, site fuel use and business and commuting travel from company cars. To reduce the carbon impact of these emissions, we introduced several measures, including the use of hybrid generators on our sites to reduce fuel consumption, emissions, and noise pollution. For example, the Wixams Academy project near Bedford, which used a hybrid generator, delivered fuel savings of 3,500 litres of diesel per month and reduced site emissions by almost nine tonnes of carbon. We also encourage the use of hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) fuels on all of our sites, because they emit ten times less carbon than mineral diesel.

"Our agile working and homeworking policies as well as the company's salary sacrifice car scheme, which encourages our employees to switch to hybrid and fully

electric lease cars, have also contributed to the reduction in emissions in recent years. Up to the end of 2022, 492 electric and plug in hybrid vehicles were ordered through the scheme. These policies have resulted in a 37% reduction in business and commute mileage since 2018.

"Additionally, we work with our energy broker to procure 100% natural renewable electricity contracts for our sites and offices, where possible. The energy bills we pay go directly towards supporting renewable power schemes. When renting offices, we work with landlords to measure energy efficiency and plans to explore how to generate green electricity for our own use.

"Reducing scope three emissions, which relate to things we have less control over, such as the extraction and processing of raw materials, transportation of goods and services, and waste disposal, is by far our biggest challenge. Scope three accounts for around 99% of our total carbon footprint, and we have set ambitious targets to support our supply chain in achieving net zero operational carbon by 2040. We collaborate with our supply chain and have worked closely with one of our groundworker partners to help them reduce their carbon emissions by 22% and realise savings of around £100,000".

James concluded by saying: "And in 2022, we worked with Microsoft to identify possible carbon savings associated with our IT operations, establishing that significant carbon savings are potentially available by switching from physical to cloud-based servers".

www.willmottdixon.co.uk



Stephen Hemmings, Head of Environment and Sustainability UK for the Building Performance Division at Etex provided a contribution to show that they believe that measurement and reduction are important. Etex has taken a Science-Based Target initiative (SBTi) approach:

A whole supply chain approach

Stephen explained that to achieve these goals, we need a shift in mindset throughout the supply chain. Most sustainability strategies have a big focus on scopes one and two with many already making significant progress in these areas.

Stephen said: "It is, however, scope three that often makes up a majority share of a construction firm's total emissions and requirements to report on them are on the rise, especially within public sector frameworks and tenders.

"Scope three is tricky to measure and control because it is interwoven throughout the supply chain with emissions coming



Stephen Hemmings, Head of Environment and Sustainability UK for the Building Performance Division at Etex



from a variety of sources, such as the production and transportation of materials, waste disposal, and employees commuting. So, to see a tangible impact, we need to take a whole supply chain approach where each individual organisation embraces working together to reduce scope three.

"This is why at Etex we recently became a partner of the Supply Chain Sustainability School (SCSS)². The school is an organisation that brings together end clients, contractors and suppliers with the shared goal of creating a more sustainable future for the built environment".



Backing targets with science

Stephen went on to explain that supply chain collaboration is key to reaching net zero throughout the industry, but we have to go further than this and back up our targets with science.

He said: "Science-based targets are a set of goals with a clear route that a business commits to in order to reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. For example, in 2012 the UK building performance division of Etex committed to a 37% reduction (relative to 1990) by 2020 as part of a far-reaching sustainability strategy following the Climate Change Act in 2008. In practice, a 44% reduction was achieved.

"By investing in efficient measures, training employees and adopting wider use of renewable energy sources, we continue to advance. For 2021 we reported a 5.7% decrease in relative carbon emissions

(scope one and two) on 2020's figures and 21.7% on 2010's, surpassing the sector target of a 20% reduction by 2025.

"The key to ensuring these targets are a success is setting goals with a core focus on the dominant sources of direct and indirect emissions produced in construction and its supply chain, setting realistic timeframes, and holding regular reviews. This enables companies to invest, innovate and implement other actions necessary to curb emissions".

Closing the loop

Stephen concluded by saying: "At Etex, recycling has been at the forefront of our minds for years. One of the main components used in the manufacture of plasterboard is gypsum. It is infinitely recyclable. So, by going the extra mile to collect and reuse gypsum waste within our factories and from sites, we can limit our consumption of natural virgin resources.

"Many manufacturers are investing in this closed-loop recycling approach. Our own efforts have meant our drywall brand, Siniat³, exceeded its recycling targets for 2021, going well above the 10% target set by the sector for the UK by 2020.

"Our focus on reducing waste is not confined to gypsum and our production facilities achieved zero waste to landfill for all materials in 2022".

www.etexgroup.com

Large organisations might choose to take an SBTi approach, which is robust and requires auditing and resources to deliver to the plan. The reasons are driven by the need to meet ESG targets and shareholders' expectations. SMEs have different drivers. They have less resources and it can be complex for them to engage into a full SBTi approach. However, it is important that they start measuring and reducing so they can respond to the expectations of clients who might require a carbon reduction plan.

Source

1. www.ghgprotocol.org/sites/default/files/standards/Corporate-Value-Chain-Accounting-Reporting-Standard_041613_2.pdf

2. www.supplychainschool.co.uk

3. www.siniat.co.uk/en-gb

HOW HAS THE OFFICE CHANGED AND HOW ARE WE ADAPTING TO INDUSTRY 4.0



Joe Cilia,
FIS Technical Director

Joe Cilia, FIS Technical Director discusses the evolution of the office as today there is a definite move to address flexibility, agility, sustainability and individuality in commercial spaces. As a solution, we are seeing the rise of the pods.

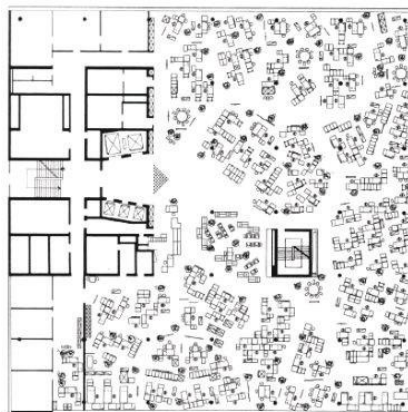
The administrative function of a business has developed over time. From Monks at desks to Clerks and Accountants often expected to work productively with little thought to the environment where the work is carried out, often because production took precedence.

As industry has evolved and the importance of administering the business, keeping records and communicating with suppliers and customers grew, the planning of where and how people worked was important so they could ultimately be efficient and accurate.

The Johnson Wax building designed by the American Architect Frank Lloyd Wright in the late 30's is often cited as the first attempt at providing a fully planned space that even included furniture, so that employees could thrive and the business would benefit with happier staff and better retention.

In 1958 a new movement appeared where the person and a more natural environment were front and centre in office design. Called BÜROLANDSCHAFT meaning office landscape, it created an interactive workspace where plants and screens separated desks. The movement quickly spread across Europe and eventually to the United States where density was seen as the goal and cubicles became the norm for most workers with those moving up the corporate ladder being rewarded with a corner office.

Meanwhile, at the same time in the UK rows of cellular individual offices adorned the management floors while admin workers sat in open plan offices where the 'soundscape' was addressed using free



Typical layout of BÜROLANDSCHAFT office

standing screens and acoustic suspended ceilings, and where no measures were taken to reduce the sound of ringing phones and typewriters. This must have been a nightmare space to work in.

Where we have come from and where we are moving to

Understanding where we have come from in office design is useful when we consider where we are moving to.

The Covid Pandemic in 2019 has been one of the biggest catalysts for change in where and how we work and some would add that Generation Z (individuals born between 1997- 2012) are looking for faster career returns, better working conditions and flexibility which is leading to a reevaluation of space and place in commercial offices.

It's clear that individual office space has been replaced for most with a workspace that may even be shared, where individuals are not permanently based at one workstation;

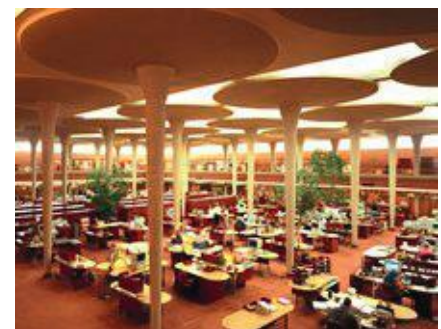
however the need for cellular spaces for meetings is still an important element.

Coupled with the transient nature of the workforce is how the space is used leading to more flexibility; even the fixed partitions need to be relocatable to accommodate this flexible approach.

Relocatable partitions

Manufacturers have always been able to provide relocatable partitions, (remember relocatable partitions are different to demountable walls which in simple terms are dismantled and disposed of, which is not a sustainable option). Relocatable partitions were part of a key component when the Architect Richard Rodgers designed the Lloyds Building in Lime Street which was opened in 1986 to provide flexibility and therefore longevity of the building and the interior which still uses the same partition installed over 35 years ago.

Relocatable partitioning is defined in RICS SKA Rating as; re-locatable or reusable systems that can be removed and relocated without substantial repair and be capable of



Johnson Wax Headquarters designed by Frank Lloyd Wright

reinstallation within a tolerance of $\pm 10\text{mm}$ of the originally installed height. Relocatable partitions are also Tax efficient as they are treated as plant and so allowable against corporation Tax. Details of the Tax allowance and the case law regarding relocatable partitions can be downloaded by visiting: www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/business-management

The partition industry has continued to develop relocatable partitions including the popular frameless glazed systems. There are examples where products are not only being moved within a space but also from building to building to reduce the carbon impact of the organisation. We expect to see more initiatives like this as leases are often much shorter than the life expectancy of the products used.

If BÜROLANDSCHAFT was a turning point 65 years ago, where are we now, and where should we look to understand trends and the blurring of what a meeting space could look like.

Biophilia is the term coined by the Harvard naturalist Dr. Edward O. Wilson to describe what he saw as humanity's "innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes" and to be drawn toward nature, to feel an affinity for it, a love, a craving. Biophilia has now been used over a number of years to complement wellbeing in the space, perhaps not too different from those design pioneers in the mid 20th century.

Today there is a definite move to address flexibility, agility, sustainability and individuality in commercial spaces.

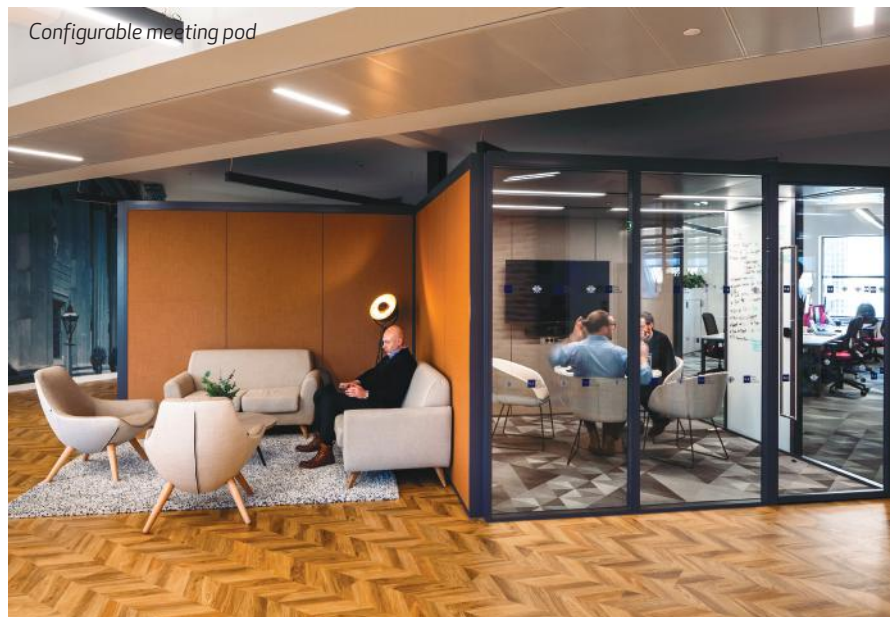
As the occupancy levels in commercial space have dropped it has allowed businesses to reassess how the space can be used to encourage people to come into the office, be more efficient, engage with a wider cohort of team members and especially new starters so they can assimilate in the business ethics and behaviours, by creating cafes, recreation space and informal meeting rooms and it's here that we are seeing the rise of Pods.

Rise of pods

Pods have been with us for a number of years, initially in the form of Phone booths or spaces for concentrated work. They are particularly useful for people who prefer to take themselves away from the sometimes noisy atmosphere of the open plan office and are often marketed as a 'Soundproof' solution; more on this later.

Recently we have seen the partition manufacturers developing products that are larger and reconfigurable meeting pods which was much in evidence at Clerkenwell Design week in May.

These Configurable meeting Pods are essentially five sided boxes where all of the



elements will contribute to sound insulation and in some cases sound absorption which can be a challenge when addressing ventilation requirements and the door detail.

To address the potential race to 'out claim' acoustic performance and provide acousticians with the data they need to correctly model and predict the potential soundscape in a space, FIS along with Cundall llp¹, University of Salford² and Sandy Brown³ have produced an Acoustic Classification scheme for configurable meeting pods⁴.

The scheme was required because there currently isn't a process to test and classify all pods. ISO 23351-1: 2020 defines a method for smaller pods, though states that the test should be conducted in a reverberation chamber where the size of the pod is limited to no more than 5% of test room volume and the sample should be a minimum of 1M from any wall or slab. Based on the dimensions of typical test facilities in the UK, this means it is not possible to test pods much larger than 11M³ in essence a two person pod. In the absence of a method to test these larger meeting pods, manufacturers are resorting to a number of parameters and descriptors to describe the sound insulation performance of their products, leading to inconsistencies confusion and a loss in the ability to compare on a like for like basis.

The FIS Acoustic classification scheme for configurable pods will use D_{SA} which is consistent with the market and more accurately accounts for pod acoustics, not room acoustics. This will allow an equal and fair comparison between the performance data for all pods, regardless of size.

The data will be analysed by either Cundall and/or Sandy Brown and then verified by the other to ensure robustness.

Interestingly, FIS has a precedence here having developed an Acoustic verification scheme for Operable walls back in 2013 which was extended to include Glazed partitions and door sets in 2019⁵.

These schemes are designed to ensure that any gamification or even deceitful practices are exposed ensuring there is a level playing field when comparing products.

The aim of these programmes is to help our members invest in the development of new products in the knowledge that they can be equally compared and informed decisions made on all the aspects of the product as part of the decision-making process.

There is little doubt that we are about to enter what some are calling Industry 4.0 where robotics and AI are part of every day in the commerce industry and even home life; either way, the way that we work, our expectations of how and where we work, collaborate and communicate with others is changing. As we have seen the 'office' is going through a transformational change. FIS members are stepping up and investing in new products to make the soundscape adapt to these expectations and the way that space is divided.

And finally, to address the 'SoundProof' claim; there is no such thing unless you included space, as 'they' say, 'In space no one can hear you scream'.

Source

1. www.cundall.com
2. www.salford.ac.uk
3. www.sandybrown.com
4. www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/specifiers/acoustic-verification-scheme/pods
5. www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/specifiers/acoustic-verification-scheme

DIGITAL TWINS PROVIDE A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER 'INTELLIGENT' FIT-OUT PROJECTS

The captivating **Bola Abisogun** OBE, Digital Director at BIM Academy (Founder & Chairman of DiverseCity Surveyors and Chair of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee at the Construction Industry Council) shares with us his inspiring journey of discovery into why and how Digital Twins can revolutionise construction [and the fit-out] process and why the built environment needs to embrace this NOW to avoid tragedies like Grenfell and achieve net-zero ambitions.



Bola Abisogun OBE, Digital Director at BIM Academy (Founder & Chairman of DiverseCity Surveyors and Chair of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee at the Construction Industry Council)

Bola passionately talks about his heritage and growing up in social housing, based in the London Borough of Hackney, so witnessing first-hand the stigma that is often attached to it.

A learned person Bola graduated with a BSc (Hons) in 1994, having written a process-level Digital Twin as part of his foray into 'artificially intelligent' data-driven, construction claims management. He has worked extensively with Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and expert systems in a bid to help resolve construction disputes in an amicable, non-contentious capacity.

In March 2022 along with a 'Who's Who' in Information Management and Digital Twins, he finished a 32 month sabbatical at the University of Cambridge, Centre for Digital Built Britain (CDBB) working on the National

Digital Twin programme (NDTp). During this time he created a 'use-case'¹ for Digital Twins in Social Housing which, supported by Tech UK has gone onto receive global recognition. The co-curator of the Digital Twin Toolkit for industry and business organisations², backed by the online Digital Twin Hub of best-practice case studies³ which supported the publication of a landmark report, 'Unlocking Value Across the UK's Digital Twin Ecosystem' [February 2021], which sets out strategic recommendations for industry and government⁴.

Bola has also recently created the 'not-for-profit' Digital Twin Skills Academy CIC (DTSA)⁵ with a culturally competent strategic offer targeted towards the 16-25 years cohort of 'non-traditional' talent and designed to empower and inspire disenfranchised young people (drawn principally from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic 'BAME' communities) into construction. The DTSA will equip the next generation talent pool with the skills required to secure employment and build careers working in specialist teams, delivering digital construction.

Bola's academic and life experiences have provided him with an important and unique perspective that has become his driving force, to inter-alia, educate the global construction industry with data-driven, information management solutions.

What is a Digital Twin

A Digital Twin is a digital replica of an intended or actual real-world physical product, system, or process that serves as its effectively indistinguishable digital counterpart for practical purposes, such as simulation, integration, testing, monitoring, and maintenance.

By collating real-world data from various sources about the building or structure the Digital Twin can be created and will allow the user to interact virtually with the physical property during the design and planning stages. When the Digital Twin is provided with further data from IoT and AI it is able to learn and will automatically update to reflect adjustments made to its real-world counterpart.

Why Digital Twins are important

Bola explained that his belief is that Digital Twin technology could have saved lives at Grenfell, and perhaps even averted the tragedy completely.

Bola said: "Had that tower had a black box (such as what is used in an airplane), I believe the emergency services would have had a different challenge and I don't think 72 people would have lost their lives. I'm being



factually correct in terms of the likelihood of what a Digital Twin solution could have achieved, had it been in place for that particular building.

"A tragedy such as Grenfell is complete, granular visibility of how broken and fragmented some sectors are. Collaboration, the timely sharing of structured data, and scaleable industry innovation just don't happen. Where it does there are pockets of excellence, but they're often so obscure no one knows about them.

"This lack of insight into ageing existing built assets in the UK is a growing challenge that the Building Safety Act is attempting to unlock, and supply chains have a critical role to play. However, due to the overwhelming presence of poor data, most councils are "haemorrhaging money" in their everyday efforts in asset management. I was a contractor for 15 years, and I've seen the scale of the challenge first hand. I also know that it's possible to do things in a much more intelligent and transparent way, with the end-user/customer in mind always.

"As a direct consequence of the Grenfell tragedy, the newly created Building Safety Act mandates that the 'Golden Thread' must chronologically document the information management procedures that need to be in place as adopted and maintained by the duty holder [i.e. the Accountable Person(s)]. Every asset owner with an 'in-scope' higher risk residential building will be required to mobilise and at least prepare to register such assets (within the aforementioned scope) prior to the end of October, subject to change via secondary legislation. Over the next six months, the current number of in scope buildings (in the order of 12,500 buildings across England) will need to be registered with the new Building Safety Regulator. From first November, subject to change via secondary legislation, any building NOT registered, but occupied, could render the asset owner vulnerable to a legal consequence not yet defined but the early warnings are that custodial sentences are NOT off the table".

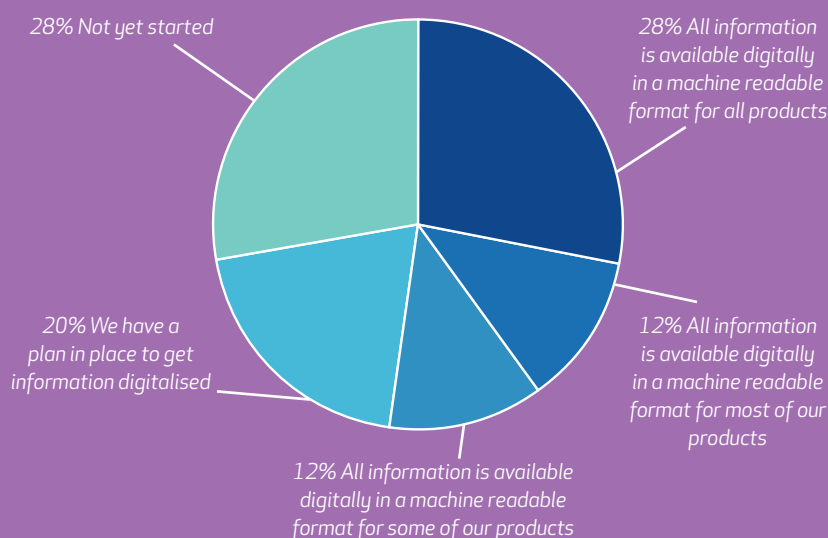
Bola went on to say: "The challenge for me with Digital Twins is not in the new build sector, that is relatively straightforward. The challenge that I want to unpack is in the existing buildings, the existing footprint and the existing fabric. "How do we allow the existing footprint/asset portfolio to complement the aspirations of the national Digital Twin programme?"

Bola explained that these ideas are broadly recognised by the government under its Net Zero 2050 carbon reduction strategy. This strategy has endorsed the creation of a national Digital Twin, in the form of a UK framework for sharing information; also known as the Information Management Framework.

The Digital Information Plan.

According to recent research by FIS, only around 40% of contractors are confident that they understand new regulatory requirements related to information management and only 14% of contractors operating in the finishes and interiors sector currently have a Digital Information Plan (See Figure 1). Manufacturers are more likely to assert that they understand the requirements (56% are confident that this is the case), however only 52% claim to have digitalised information already with only just over a quarter claiming that they have machine readable information for all products.

Figure 1. Illustrates the research conducted by FIS



Bola concluded by saying: "A Digital Twin relies on frequent communication and collaboration, with up-front work and real-time updates to be truly successful. Digital Twins will help us make smarter, more sustainable, people-centric decisions for our communities. In this way, we will successfully address the growing inequality, unspoken poverty, and increasing social stigma.

"In the presence of our current net-zero ambition, the commercial Fit-out sector does not have the luxury of time and the culture of the sector needs to change to embrace this disruptive and much needed technological paradigm".

How are Digital Twins for the Fit-out Sector made accessible and shared?

Digital Twins can be accessed through specialised software platforms, such as Autodesk, Bentley Systems, Matterport, TwinView and TwinnedIt.

How to use Digital Twins in the Fit-out Sector?

Digital Twins will improve the analytical capabilities of Building Information Modelling (BIM). Digital Twin technology adds a new level of sophistication to BIM models, so that stakeholders can visualise

the real-time status, working conditions, and position of physical assets.

Thanks to Digital Twins, asset owners and facility managers are able to reconstruct every metric from a physical structure in a digital environment. Project teams can also experiment digitally and analyse expected outcomes before they make changes that impact the actual physical building, structure or work site.

How ready is your business to meet new Digital/Golden Thread Requirements in the Building Regulations?

To help members set down their own Golden Thread FIS has developed members "Getting Started with Your Digital Information Plan" the guide can be downloaded from the FIS Website at: www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/digital-toolkit/getting-started-with-your-digital-information-plan

1. www.techuk.org/what-we-deliver/events/unlocking-value-across-the-uk-s-digital-twin-ecosystem.html
2. <https://tinyurl.com/jzjvvtkj>
3. www.digitaltwinhub.co.uk
4. <https://tinyurl.com/3hey324x>
5. www.digitaltwinskills.academy

THE GREAT DEBATE: THE FUTURE OF CAT A FIT-OUT

“Can you hear another debate on the future of CAT A Fit-out”. Hear what some industry experts think about this subject.



Duncan Morris, Head of Sustainability at Fourfront Group



Penny McCallum, Environmental Manager at BW: Workplace Experts



Adam Strudwick Corporate Interiors, Principal at Perkins & Will

The terms CAT A and CAT B are commonly used in the fit-out sector, but there are no standard definitions. Typically, CAT A refers to the “Landlord fit-out”, a blank canvass state that is used to return the building to a base state and present the space to future tenants and CAT B, the “client fit-out” that tailors the space to specific requirements. This process has been under increased scrutiny with the

British Council of Offices (BCO) in their recent report Circular Economy in Offices recommending that CAT A is eliminated from office fit-out unless specified by the incoming occupier.

In this article, SpecFinish asked three experts from Fourfront Group, at BW: Workplace Experts and Perkins & Will for their opinion on this very topical and divisive subject.

Duncan Morris, Head of Sustainability at Fourfront Group explained the industry wide accepted definitions and interpretations of CAT A, CAT A + and CAT B space continues to evolve. With the continued movement towards Sustainably led design and build gathering pace, the traditional potentially wasteful practices of designing spaces with marketability prioritised ahead of sustainability are no longer acceptable. While complete clarity on tenant,



space and end use can remain in flux during progression through design development, the driver should remain to ensure that Sustainability is adequately considered at the earliest possible opportunity. This ensures that a project has the opportunity to incorporate sustainable, and avoid wasteful, outcomes at a stage where they can have the greatest impact.

Duncan said: "The ongoing balance between marketability and sustainability is an important consideration when developing commercial space. On one hand, the visual appeal and ease of visualisation of a completed CAT A space is useful for attracting potential tenants. "Conversely, we need to consider the sustainability benefits of preventing wastage potentially caused by modifying a CAT A space to allow a CAT B design to work. Almost inevitably separate scopes of works increase inefficiencies whereby at best additional time is needed, and at worst entire sections need to be reworked requiring additional materials and generating additional waste".

He explained the contractual requirement to return a space back to the same CAT A standard at the end of a tenancy is another consideration in terms of cost, time and environmental impact. Other considerations include:

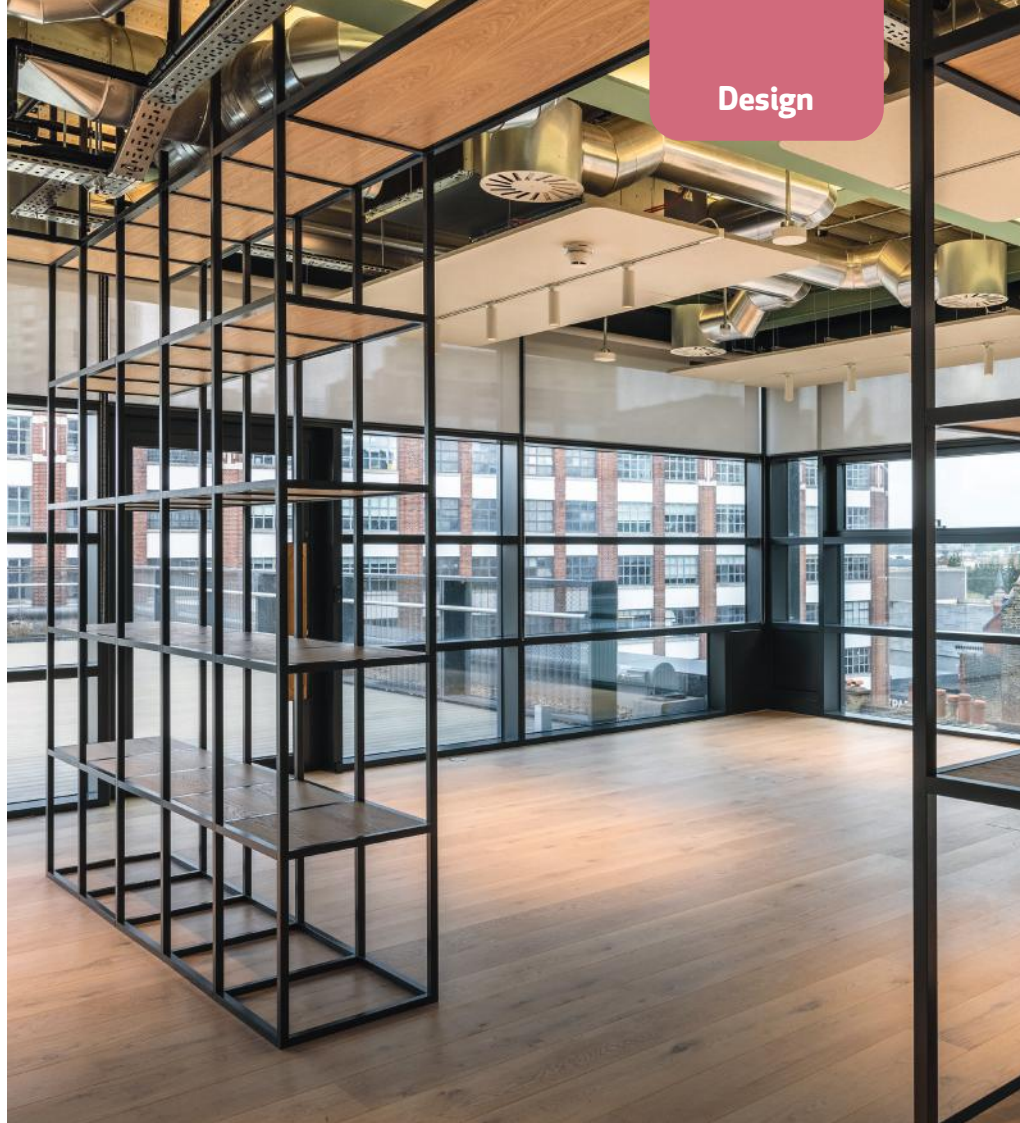
Holistic design: CAT A spaces should be designed with reusability and detachable components prioritised in order to reduce waste and damage in removal. CAT B – Designed with full awareness of the existing M&E (plus other CAT A components) to try and reduce the impact of modifying systems throughout the space.

Embracing partnerships: Main contractors and subcontractors who implement circularity throughout their work is beneficial across all stages of a construction project, and can be equally useful in reducing waste when converting a CAT A space to CAT B. Early engagement with a contractor can also allow for a reduction in negative impact.

Storage & reuse: Storing items over the course of the tenancy for use in dilapidations to return the space back to the required standard, to prevent the need for additional procurement or repair work to realise savings both in terms of cost and a reduction in Environmental impact.

Technology: Virtual reality can aid visualisation of spaces to clients, with a view to reducing the need for intermediary CAT A space. BIM can also be used to enhance efficiencies, reduce wastage and enhance the potential to build a sustainably considered space.

www.fourfrontgroup.co.uk



Penny McCallum, Environmental Manager at BW: Workplace Experts shared her opinion and explained the property industry is accountable for about 38% of energy consumption and 29% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the EU.

Penny said: "One of the biggest challenges in reducing this is the poor energy efficiency of existing buildings. Currently, a third of all commercial properties in the UK (approx. 600,000) are considered historical sites and 80% of the London office estate, where BW: Workplace Experts are based, have an EPC rating of D or lower. Ambitious renovation policies could reduce this energy demand by up to 46% between 2021 and 2030 and provide significant economic output for the industry.

"By 2030 it will be a legal requirement for all commercial and leased buildings to have an EPC rating of B. We believe this requirement, along with addressing the gap between predicted and actual environmental performance, should be seen as an opportunity for all CAT A projects both now and in the future. Tenants and asset owners are all striving to meet net zero carbon targets in-line with the Paris agreement, and as such are looking to invest. It is widely acknowledged that if this investment is not made now, they face a real risk of owning "stranded assets" that will not meet future energy efficiency standards and will not be financially viable to upgrade".

Penny concluded by saying: "We are looking to support clients through these challenges. We believe that to achieve the best results the building should be looked at as a whole; with a key focus on the upgrading of ventilation systems, the building fabric and lighting, and using tools that will demonstrate the design is fit for purpose. However, this cannot be done in isolation, we must also support the switch to a circular economy and invest in the upskilling of our supply chain through organisations such as the Supply Chain Sustainability School".

www.wearebw.com

Adam Strudwick, Corporate Interiors, Principal at Perkins & Will said: "I have two initial simplistic thoughts on why CAT A is a redundant part of the commercial real estate industry.

"Firstly, at Perkins & Will we look at lots of high-quality new buildings with clients, it's very rare for them to comment on the quality/value of the CAT A installation and its benefits to them. Occupiers appear much more interested in a buildings location, brand presence, views, efficiency, experience and of course cost.

"Secondly, New York which has a real estate market that's comparable to London has never delivered either new or refurbished buildings to a CAT A level, there the standard delivered product is shell and core".

Adam passionately explained that as a philosophy, the idea of putting in place millions of sq ft of virgin building materials only for them to be stripped-out without ever being used is absurd in a time when we are facing a climate emergency.

He said: "As real estate professionals, we need to be finding every opportunity to reduce the operational and embodied carbon footprint of buildings throughout their life cycle.

"Delivering a building to shell and core and negotiating a contribution, is the most efficient way for a tenant to start the fit-out process in most cases and certainly for projects that sit within the medium to large banding and where the most progress can happen. This allows ceilings, lighting and services to be designed in the most effective and efficient way.

"Much larger projects are often negotiated early and therefore delivered to shell and floor and smaller projects can benefit from starting from CAT A as it is likely there will be fewer changes at high level and therefore less waste".

Adam concluded by saying: "Although my feelings are strong about the need to eradicate much of the buildings delivered as CAT A, I do see a better future where developments are delivered to a new CAT A (adaptable) which would be a building

platform that supports circular design principles, allows for a low friction tenant occupation and support the needs of dynamic, changing organisations to evolve within their space".

www.perkinswill.com

FIS CEO, **Iain McIlwee** commented: "The world is seldom binary and the same is true in the CAT A to CAT B debate. At our recent Industry Day: Commercial Fit-Out and D&B the poll "Is there still a need for CAT A?" split the room - literally 50:50! It is clear that we are seeing a change with the blurring of the boundaries between the old Landlord Fit-out and Client Fit-out. This is inevitable as we redefine what we need and expect from space. The simple fact is that the commercial office space is becoming less about "metres squared" and more "facilities shared" with tenants demanding less, but higher quality space and with it a higher expectation of services available through the Building overall.

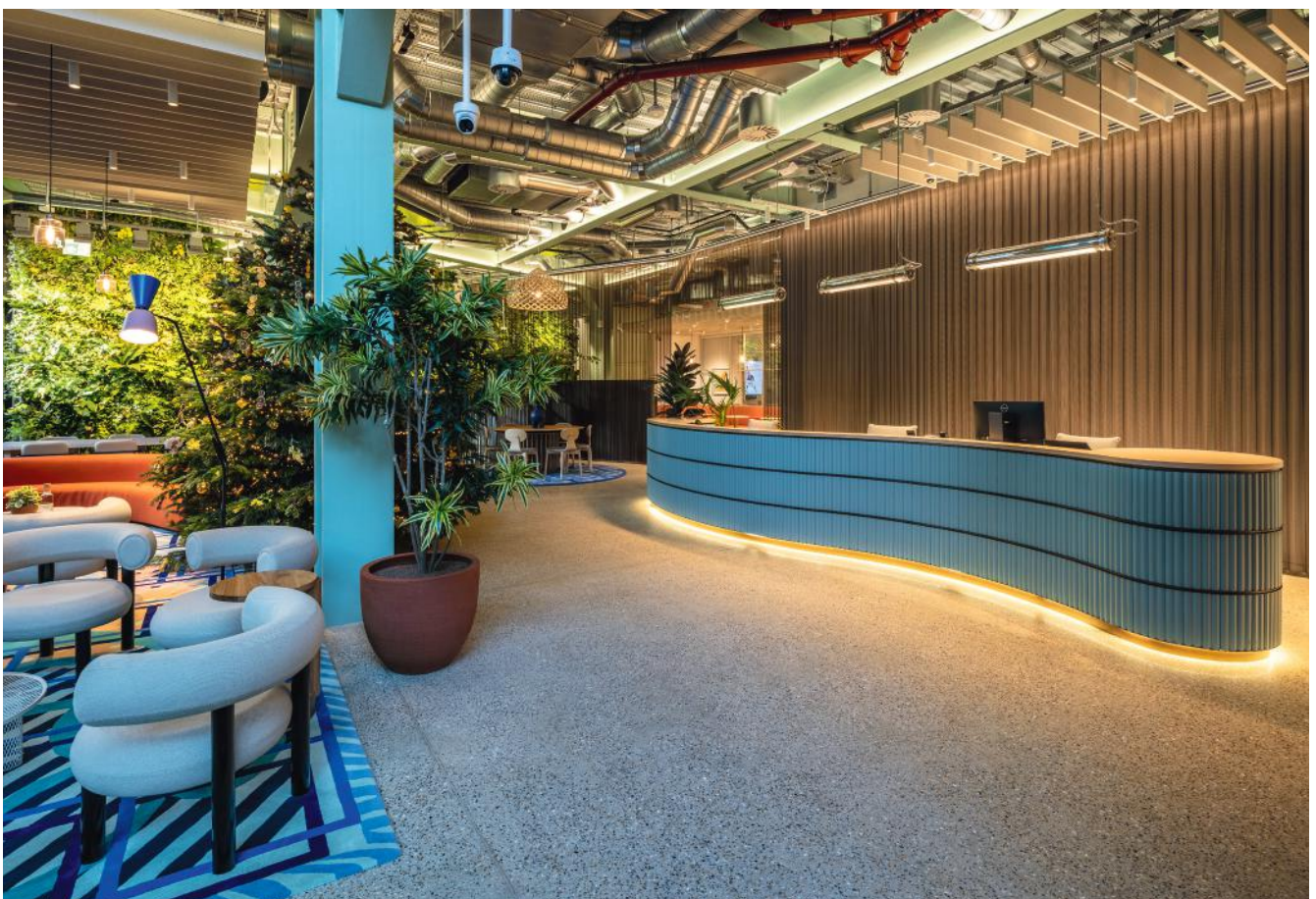
"Whilst there was recognition of CAT A in supporting space management and letting, all acknowledge that the process can be wasteful and that we cannot, regardless of your view of the need for CAT A, allow this to continue. There was also concern that the options are not fully understood and more needs to be done to help clients to make better decisions, with 92% of attendees

agreeing that we need new standard definitions of the fit-out options to support understanding of CAT A, CAT A+, CAT B and Shell and Core options.

"In our discussion, we got into a number of challenges, not least inefficiencies in procurement, the fixation on capital cost, insufficient infrastructure to support re-use and perhaps the biggest hurdle whether the fit-out contractor has the time and is engaged early enough to impact the decision. The general consensus was that more needs to be done to look at the process and encourage a less wasteful and more circular approach. This has quickly moved from a discussion about the art of the impossible to is an area of real focus for us now.

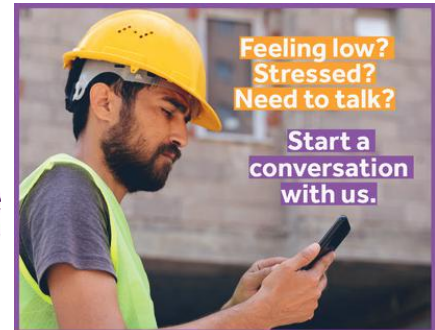
"Fundamentally I believe this evolution is a huge opportunity for fit-out contractors to get involved far earlier in the design and planning stage to co-ordinate strip-out activities and ensure that there is an effective discourse around transitions, assets that can be reused and products that should be designed to be re-used".

We want to hear what you have to say on this subject. To join the debate visit: <https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90570592/The-Great-Cat-A-Debate>



DON'T IGNORE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MENTAL HEALTH – ACT NOW

Every working day, two construction workers take their own life, and that stress, anxiety and depression accounts for a fifth of all work-related illness¹.



These are extremely worrying statistics that MUST not be ignored. Importantly there are many mental health charities in the UK that provide specific types of support to those who need it most, so the individuals with mental health struggles and the people around them such as their families whose pain is sometimes forgotten.

SpecFinish spoke to **Sarah Bolton**, Chief Operating Officer at Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity which provides emotional, physical, and financial wellbeing support to the construction community and their families.

A crucial element of our strategy is to provide a wide range of free and widely available pro-active resources to support the industry.

We offer a free and confidential 24/7 Construction Industry Helpline and text HARDHAT service which provides a range of information, guidance and support on a huge variety of wellbeing issues. These services are complemented by the free Self Support App which offers another route to support, along with our Lighthouse Beacons which provide a safe space for people to share concerns.

Resources to support the industry

24/7 Construction Industry Telephone Helpline²: Call **0345 605 1956** (UK) and **1800 939122** (ROI). Free and confidential emotional, physical and financial wellbeing advice and support. Whether you're an employer or an employee, the helpline provides the first point of contact for those who need to access a range of completely confidential support services.

Expert helpline advisors provide a listening ear and are able to signpost to additional support where necessary. Many callers present complex issues that need multiple interventions and these are managed by caseworkers. The caseworkers specialise in providing holistic support and working with third party organisations to ensure that

callers get the support they need to access all of the possible help available,

Text HARDHAT Service²: If you are uncomfortable talking or unable to find space for a private phone conversation you can Text **HARDHAT to 85258** (UK) and **HARDHAT to 50808** (ROI) for 24/7, free and confidential guidance and support over text. Share what you're comfortable with, whether you're feeling overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, suicidal or simply struggling with everyday life.

24/7 Construction Industry Helpline App²:

The ultimate self help tool in the palm of your hand. The app focuses on preventative tools and building resilience in the areas of emotional, physical and financial wellbeing. It also offers self-assessment tools, coping strategies and referral pathways to access expert advice and support. Even better, the app checks in with users on a daily basis to monitor their mood and prompts appropriate interventions to help them dependent on the responses given. The app's geolocator means that users can be signposted to support services local to where they live as well as national help centres.

The Lighthouse Charity Wellbeing

Academy³: Offers a huge variety of free wellbeing training including soft skills, leadership training and mental health first aid training. The academy offers a variety of platforms to suit every learning style from self paced e-learning, tutor led online masterclasses and seminars, through to bespoke onsite training.

Critical Incident Support⁴: This service delivers essential support and early intervention during demanding situations, preventing future and longer-term emotional health issues. The Critical Response Service can be deployed quickly to support individuals and teams on site who may have witnessed or been affected by the incident in some way.

Lighthouse Beacons⁵: These 'beacons' utilise existing groups such as Mangang and Dadspace and offer a safe place to share and socialise with likeminded people. The

beacons are facilitated by individuals with lived experiences who are able to encourage those struggling with life problems to share their issues talk in a confidential and supportive environment. It's also an opportunity to meet new people and many of the groups share a common interest such as rambling or cycling so it's a chance to get fit too!

Become a Lighthouse Charity Company Supporter

The Lighthouse Charity receives no public funding and relies on the generosity of those within the industry to help us continue our vital work. Simply pledging an annual donation can help us have a predictable and sustainable income stream to maintain and develop our vital charitable services. There are lots of fantastic benefits including free scheduled online mental health first aid (MHFA) training and access to an exclusive Company Supporters Hub with a huge range of resources.

FIS joined forces with Minster to raise money for the Lighthouse Club at its Awards Lunch last month. Thanks to all those in the room, over £4,000 was raised to support the charity.

To learn more about the wide range of support that's available and become a company supporter visit:

www.lighthouseclub.org

Source

1. www.lighthouseclub.org
2. www.constructionindustryhelpline.com
3. www.lighthouseclub.org/wellbeingacademy
4. www.constructionindustryhelpline.com/critical-incident
5. <https://tinyurl.com/2xsmme8y>

A TRULY SUSTAINABLE FIT-OUT FIBREBOARD

In this series about new, innovative and groundbreaking materials, **Stuart Devoil**, Group Head of Marketing at James Latham talks about Honext®, a next-generation interior fibreboard with unrivalled green credentials.



Stuart Devoil, Group Head of Marketing at James Latham

Construcia Offices, HONEXT® Board for Acoustic Clouds and Ceilings



Stuart explained sustainability is fast becoming a non-negotiable within the design brief, affecting everyone in the specification game, fit-out professionals included. However, it's not the be-all and end-all. As any commercial specifier knows, low-carbon fixtures, fittings, and finishes must also meet high-performance attributes and possess strong visual appeal.

Stuart said: "It can be a delicate balance to strike, and materials that deliver on all these criteria can be even harder to find, especially when a client digs their heels in and will not compromise on requirements. This is particularly the case with interior paneling, where two out of three can easily be met, but the third is more elusive.

"When it comes to substrates and traditional construction panels, things are generally pretty stable. In ceilings and partitions, you might use plasterboard, plywood, or even MDF but there aren't really that many alternatives outside of this.

"That is until now, with the introduction of Honext®, a next-generation interior fibreboard that not only looks good but possesses the resistance and acoustic requirements demanded by a busy office or retail environment. It is also a carbon-neutral product, with a net zero emission manufacturing process, achieving a win-win situation all around, even when confronted by the most stringent brief.

Green paper trail

Taking a closer look, Honext® was originally developed from a project at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain, which looked at using 100% waste raw materials to produce a sustainable construction panel with fantastic acoustic, thermal, and moisture-resisting properties.

Manufactured from waste pulp cellulose fibres, collected from paper and printing plants across Europe, this wood-based slurry is then blended with a natural, formaldehyde-free biobased

treatment to produce a fully recyclable, toxin-free fibreboard.

From an environmental standpoint, it's a real game-changer, achieving a product that is 100% waste raw material, cradle-to-cradle silver certified, carbon neutral production, with zero toxins or Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs).

In short, it's an authentically sustainable construction panel that perfectly embodies the principles of the Circular Economy's 'Five R's': Rethink, Reuse, Refurbish, Repair and Recycle. Crucially, it's helping fit-out professionals make an environmentally responsible material choice, with the benefits passed onto the client through a low-carbon interior.

A fit-out professional's fantasy

Not only is the product a fit-out professional's fantasy, from a fabrication perspective, Honext is also incredibly easy to work to specification and install. Lighter than most MDF or gypsum-based plasterboards, the density of 650kg/m³ means that, whilst it's a rigid board, perfect for ceilings and partitions and acoustic panels, it's still fibrous enough to be CNC machined, sculpted, laser-etched, or worked with regular woodworking tools.

It can also be painted, stained or coated to achieve almost any aesthetic. Furthermore, the surface can also be laminated to contrast or match furniture and materials including natural stone or timber.

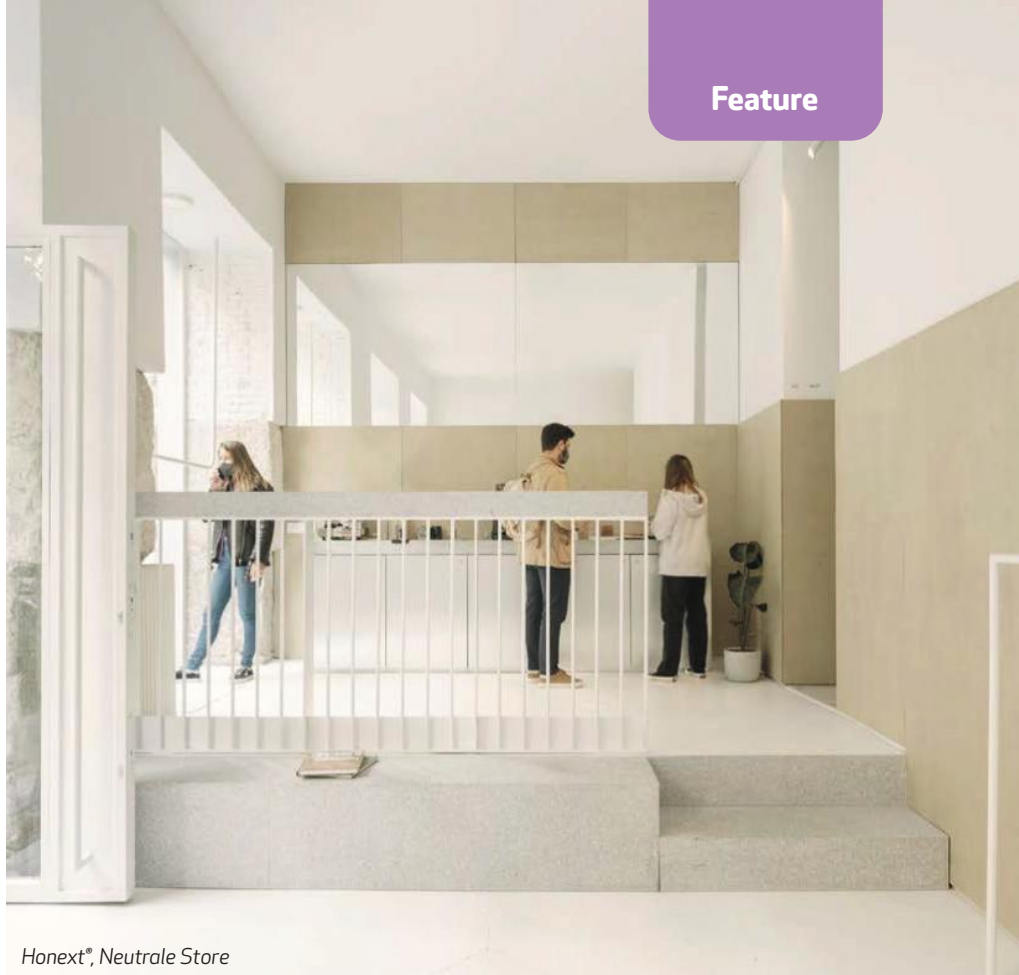
Even better, it can be bonded together into a solid block, and shaped or sculpted. This means it can be used for temporary installation purposes in addition to its core paneling function. For example, in a recent high-end retail project, Honext® panels were laminated together, then carved out to faithfully replicate fluted concrete walls, whereas using the real thing would have been extremely heavy, messy, highly unsustainable, and very expensive.

A sound investment

Optimum acoustics are a vital requirement within retail or commercial office space and it's something Honext® undeniably achieves. The panels are designed to feature better sound absorption properties than traditional building materials, and in recent acoustic performance tests achieved a rating of dB 24.

Resistant to moisture and water vapour, Honext boards are also compliant with the latest fire safety guidance and requirements for commercial buildings, recently achieving B-s1,d0 classification.

This results in a safe, comfortable, and healthy workspace which not only benefits occupants, but the environment too.



Honext®, Neutrale Store

Continental style and substance

The product is relatively new to the UK market, having only been introduced in late 2021. However, it's already attracting interest from the fit-out community, who have seen how the panels have been ingeniously specified on a wide range of office projects in Continental Europe.

One of these projects is the headquarters of Spanish EV charging point manufacturer, Wallbox, where green construction firm Construcia, and commercial fit-out specialist Mecakim, used Honext® panels to build acoustic islands across the interiors.

In this instance, not only did the product specified achieve optimal sound absorption required across the large office, it's zero emissions credentials meant it also met the strict Cradle to Cradle certification needs of the client's brief. Adding further value each board was drilled with a uniform dot pattern creating an attractive effect that further enhanced the cool and contemporary look Wallbox was aiming to create.

Dusseldorf-based Urselmann Interiors also used Honext® in a visually striking way for their own 'Circular Office', which had been deliberately designed to meet circular economic principles. Here the boards were pared down to individual planks and used for the meeting room skirting as well as cladding for the space's arched doorways. This was not only a carbon-neutral project but also a great showcase of the product's potential for fabricators.

An all-round performer

With a raft of awards already under its belt, Honext® is a construction material that's blurring the lines between traditional boards, producing a panel that pulls together the best bits of all of them, then adds a little something extra.

In terms of topline specs the boards are made from 100% paper waste and are 100% recyclable. They have an aforementioned density of 650 kg/m³, are 12 mm in thickness, with a dimension of 1220 x 2440 mm.

Stuart concluded: "Honext is one of the most innovative and exciting substrate materials available for the UK fit-out community. Only available in the UK via James Latham, it can be ordered from any of our 14 depots in the UK and Ireland, in addition to our broad stocks of decorative and construction panels, hardwoods, engineered and modified timber, solid surfaces, laminates, veneers, melamines, and more.

"We're well versed in bringing pioneering products to market and the introduction of Honext is yet another example of our longstanding commitment to championing more sustainable practices across the design and construction community."



FIND OUT MORE

To find out more about what makes this material so special visit:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmadzC4eU7I

www.lathamtimber.co.uk



CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN OUR SECTOR

The FIS Contractors Awards are held annually to promote and encourage high levels of craftsmanship in the finishes and interiors sector.

The FIS Contractors Awards lunch was held at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London on 8 June. The afternoon event gathered together almost 600 leading figures from the sector to celebrate the achievements of the winners and provide a networking opportunity for like-minded individuals to come together.

Guest speaker Alistair McGowan led the proceedings, in which winners across nine categories were announced. All contracts entered were visited by two independent award judges and the architect or interior designer of the winning contracts also received an award.

The independent award judges Tony Pieri and Colin Hunter explained as ever, all the entries have been of the highest quality. The differences in the projects, as far as the awards go, are minimal, with decimal points ultimately separating an FIS contractor receiving or not receiving an award. It really is as close as that.

Tony said: "As judges, we take our responsibilities very seriously as

we fully understand the hard work and endeavour everyone has applied to the project they have entered for the awards process. We recognise the pride you feel in your work as that is fundamentally why you have entered your project in the first place. For that reason, winner or not, we would like to congratulate you all on such unbelievable work, evident in some shape or form in all the entries we viewed.

"The past 12 months have again been increasingly challenging and uncertain for us all. However, FIS contractor members continue to produce excellent work against the increasing pressure of tight budgets and challenging time constraints. That characterises the spirit of FIS members, who consistently demonstrate the resolve to do a good job on time and within budget.

"It has been a real pleasure for Colin and me to witness such outstanding and varied work. So, thank you to everyone for the courtesy and valuable time, you have generously extended to us on our visits."

Project of the Year Winner:

Indeglas for its project at the Advanced Research Centre, University of Glasgow



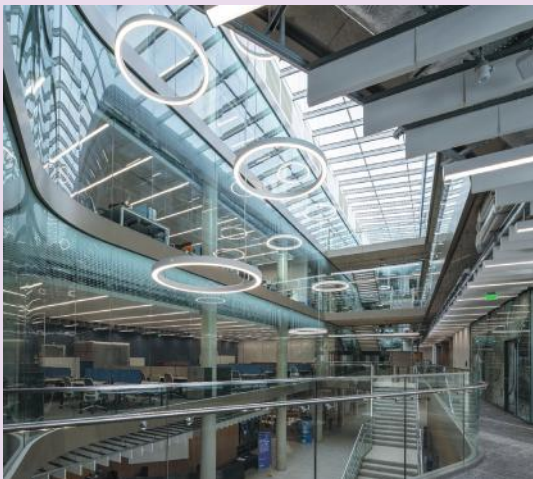
Guest judge

Architect **Robert Fry** BA (Hons) DipArch MA RIBA, International and Executive Director at Aukett Swanke Group plc, was the guest judge for the 2023 FIS Contractors Awards, selecting the overall Project of the Year from the winning contracts across all categories. Robert has over 40 years of experience in the property and construction sector and is a multiskilled architect and manager combining leadership and creative thinking with business acumen developed from designing and delivering projects large and small in many countries.

Guest judges' comments

Robert said: "Driven by a brief to achieve a collaborative environment to stimulate human connectivity for the University's academic and research community, this beautifully crafted building by architect HOK International has exploited the daylight potential of the site in a building form that has allowed Indeglas to create a spectacular glazed atrium and a series of high-performance function rooms with their range of high-quality products and systems.

"Executed to a very high level of workmanship and detail, using efficient and economic processes including modular secondary steelwork and large format floor to slab glass panels, available daylight is allowed to penetrate the very heart of the atrium to promote the wellbeing of all building users."



Advanced Research Centre, University of Glasgow



The Indeglas team receiving their Project of the Year Award



During the Lunch, FIS also acknowledged two individuals for their contribution to the sector.

Outstanding Service Award

Helen Tapper, FIS Immediate Past President was awarded the inaugural Outstanding Service Award for her commitment to the sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. Helen took the role of FIS President in November 2019 and around her chaos descended. Presenting the award, FIS President Philip Brown said "Helen's legacy as FIS President is assured. Without doubt, she has left the biggest boots for me to fill. The pandemic was the most challenging time many of us will have known in business, for FIS too, but our trade body came through stronger, having been a beacon of light in our darkest hour. This was in no small part thanks to Helen and her stoic leadership."



Helen Tapper receiving her award from FIS President Philip Brown

The Lifetime Achievement Award

The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to one of the stalwarts of our industry – Dave Bonner, Managing Director of Nevill Long, who at the end of March embarked on his well-earned retirement following a career spanning 46 years! Incredibly, Dave spent all his working years with Nevill Long. FIS Chief Executive Iain McIlwee said: "Dave is an industry man through and through. His unwavering and passionate support of both customers and the wider sector has helped shape the industry for the better and been a source of inspiration for many."



Dave Bonner receiving his award from FIS Chief Executive Iain McIlwee

The other category winners were:

Interior Fit-Out

Small contracts - Tapper Interiors, JCT 600 Ferrari, Leeds

Large contracts - Domino Commercial Interiors, 1 Knightsbridge Green, London



Steel Framed Systems

Small contracts - Drywall Contracts, Molecular Science, University of Birmingham

Large contracts - Drywall Contracts, Kenilworth School and Sixth Form Relocation Project, Warwickshire



Partitioning including Operable Walls

Small contracts - Optima, Mazars, London

Large contracts - Indeglas, Advanced Research Centre, University of Glasgow

Operable Walls - Style Moveable Partitioning Specialists, Project Mosaic, Reckitt Benckiser, Berkshire



Plastering

Heritage - Locker and Riley (Fibrous Plastering), KOKO, London

Fibrous and GRG - Fine Art Mouldings, The Peninsula London



Drylining commercial

Phoenix Drywall (UK), Faculty of Social Sciences, Sheffield



Drylining residential

Measom Dryline, Knightsbridge Gardens, London



Ceilings

Small contracts - ARM Concepts, 1-2 Finsbury Square, London

Large contracts - Integra Contracts, Battersea Power Station, Halo Bridge and Turbine Hall B, London



Specialist Joinery

Veitch Interiors, Boclair Academy, Scotland



To read more about the awards and the category winner's contracts visit:

www.heyzone.com/flip-book/specfinish/contractors-awards-2023



DESIGNING ACOUSTIC EXCELLENCE

Andrew Parkin, Partner and Global Head of Acoustics at Cundall, **Ben Southgate**, Principal Engineer at Sandy Brown and **Pascal Van Dort**, Global Acoustics Ambassador at Rockfon share their expertise on how good acoustic design plays a critical role in the design of a space, enhancing experience and supporting positive wellbeing.

Acoustic Comfort



Andrew Parkin,
Partner and Global Head
of Acoustics at Cundall

Acoustic comfort is something very subjective, as one person's concept of comfort can be different from another's. The concept though, is that someone can be comfortable in (or even because of) their sonic environment. In addition to varying between people, it can also change due to the time of day, a person's mood, the task they need to perform, their personality type, whether they are neurodiverse etc.

The term Acoustic Comfort can be used to describe conditions required for a person to feel calm, energised, comfortable or exhilarated. It is a positive state of being. It is a sense of home. It can be created by music, natural sounds or some other acoustic feature that puts people in their "happy place".

When we look to create acoustic comfort in the workplace, this can pose design challenges. How do we curate an environment where people are not only comfortable (which is a baseline expectation), but inspired to do great work, or even helped to work more efficiently? Much of this will be task-based and dependent on what work a person needs to do.

If the task at hand requires quiet concentration, then acoustic comfort will be the ability to concentrate in a calm

environment without being unduly disturbed. In this case, a combination of sound insulation and reverberation control will be required and is likely that this task will need to be carried out in an enclosed or semi-enclosed area, away from noisy office activities.

If collaboration is required then it will be the ability to hear and understand the people being collaborated with, whilst not being disturbed by others not involved in the process. Similar to quiet concentration, a combination of sound reduction and reverberation control will be required, but to a lesser extent. If two or more people are in a conversation then the potential for distraction from elsewhere in the same space is reduced.

In addition to the physical properties of a space (eg partitions, screens, ceilings, wall panels, suspended absorbers etc.), the acoustic background is also important. Both privacy and intelligibility (the ability to understand, as well as hear) are contingent on the appropriate level of background sound; generally, the greater the difference

between the sound being heard and the background level, the more likely speech will be understood or distraction will occur. By manipulating the background level then this can have a profound impact on privacy intelligibility/communication; this is the concept behind speech masking, artificially raising the background sound level to obscure (or mask) speech. Speech masking is normally an electronic system, using an "anonymous" broad-spectrum sound that provides a constant background to enhance speech privacy. This is not a new concept and commercial speech masking systems have been available for 30+ years.

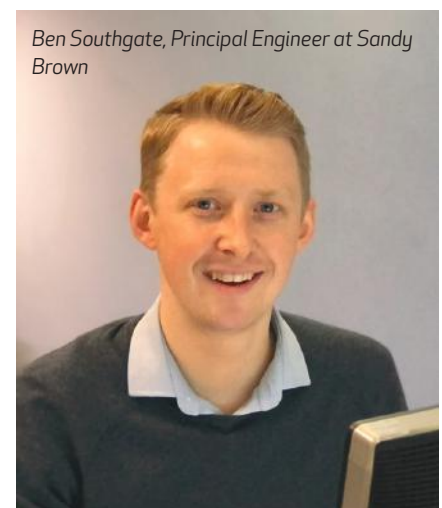
But if we are looking to enhance the sonic environment then perhaps we need to be looking at introducing more positive sound, rather than something that blends into the background. What about using natural sounds such as running water (waterfalls, rainfall, the sea), birdsong, music, etc.? If we can bring those sounds of home into the office environment then perhaps that can help provide the acoustic comfort we crave.

www.cundall.com

How to measure acoustic performance to guarantee results



An example of Acoustic Comfort in the workplace



Ben Southgate, Principal Engineer at Sandy Brown

Why do we test?

Good acoustic design relies on good test data for the products and systems being considered. This could be to determine feasibility, ratify concepts or simply check compliance when installed on site. Ensuring we have robust and reliable data is paramount to the acoustic design. Garbage in equals garbage out.

Where do we test?

Laboratory (lab) based tests are used to understand how products/systems perform on their own, in controlled conditions. This can then be applied to a wide range of scenarios as the foundation for design development. To apply this data correctly, the acoustician needs to understand precisely how it has been tested. Site testing defines how something performs in a real situation, with the combined influence of a supporting design. This is of most use on the site being tested, but is harder to extrapolate or apply to different contexts.

What can we test?

There are three main parameters that can be tested:

- Noise levels - how loud or quiet something is
- Sound insulation - how much a partition or element reduces sound travelling from one space to another
- Reverberation time - how long sound takes to decay within a room (sometimes referred to as rooms being echoey). This is influenced by the provision of sound absorbent finishes.

How do we test?

Noise levels are recorded using a sound level meter, which measures sound pressure levels. Noise levels tested in a lab are commonly presented as sound power levels. A useful analogy to understand the difference is that of an electric heater. This has a specified power rating, though the temperature experienced depends on the room characteristics (eg, size/insulation) and how far you are from it. The same is true with sound. An item of equipment will have a set sound power level, though the sound pressure level experienced varies with the environment, as well as how near or far you are from it.

To measure sound insulation, a loudspeaker playing high levels of sound is placed in a room. The sound level is then measured in that room as well as in the room next door. In simple terms, the sound insulation is the difference between the two. Lab tests are often presented as R_w values, with site tests often shown as D_w or $D_{nT,w}$ values.



Testing Noise Levels: Lab test for sound power level

Reverberation time is measured by abruptly stopping a loud noise source, and measuring the time taken for the sound to decay (by 60 dB). Rooms with lots of hard finishes (eg, glass and stone) have a longer reverberation time compared to those with lots of soft, sound absorbent finishes (eg sound absorbent wall or ceiling panels).

Lab tests are used to define how much sound absorption different products provide. This data is used by acousticians in their assessments to calculate a room reverberation time. Sound absorption ratings for products are shown as α_w values, which range from zero (no absorption) to one (complete absorption). These are often assigned absorption classes (Class A/B/C etc.), with Class A providing the most absorption.

Who can test?

In principle, acoustic testing can be undertaken by any competent person, if the methods and apparatus used conform to recognised industry standards. All too often though, this is unfortunately not the case. Unsubstantiated, throwaway marketing claims (eg 'sound-proof' or 'eliminates all noise') are tell-tale signs of something being not quite right. Requesting a full test report is a great way to question the validity of the data, and to understand how something has been tested.

In summary, good acoustic test data is critical to good design. As a non-acoustician, having a basic understanding of the difference between real data and unsubstantiated marketing claims can make all the difference. This also helps when questioning the reliability of data to ensure you get what you expect.

If in doubt, ask an acoustician!

www.sandybrown.com



Testing Noise Levels: Site test for sound pressure level

How the acoustic environment can support wellbeing in interior design

Pascal Van Dort, Global Acoustics Ambassador at Rockfon



Sound is an essential building material

Most tend to see architecture as a 3D discipline, focusing on its visual, spatial and functional aspects. But architecture is always experienced in 4D. Sound and acoustics are crucial dimensions for a person's experience.

Sound exists in architecture and architecture exists in sound¹. The process of how the two have influenced each other can be observed throughout history. The phenomenon of mutual interconnection between the physical space and the experience of sound has existed for thousands of years.

Now in the 21st century, with increasing urbanisation, acoustic design in buildings becomes essential because of proximity to everything. Understanding the sonic environment is fundamental. Sound is not a tangible thing, it is a transformative



experience². We tend to get used to sounds, but we don't notice the immense impact it has on our lives.

Positive architectural acoustics can benefit people's health, happiness, wellbeing and overall quality of life. There are many studies that highlight how poor acoustics and noise pollution can negatively impact people, especially when we are working in an office³.

One of the biggest challenges in designing for acoustics is striking the balance between noise and silence. Spaces can also be too quiet, and not all "sound" is "noise". This is highly dependent on the type of activities being carried out in the office. Addressing acoustics and well-being within a workplace will allow employees to feel more comfortable, which will result in a happier, healthier and more productive workforce. 94% believe they'd be more productive in a less noisy environment⁴.

Office design concepts will be flexible, have shared spaces in an open environment, use sustainable solutions, focus on wellbeing, designed with high quality and durable products. But there will be no ideal office, no one-size-fits-all. Offices will be blended. The final design will be defined by who the office design is made for, which activities take place in the office, how these activities will take place, where they take place and what the culture of the company is.

Office zoning/play hide-and-seek in the workplace

To address noise, floor plans should be designed with intent and use in mind. Location is important, since noise from creative or collaborative spaces impacts spaces intended for concentration or contemplation. Place potentially very noisy activities such as the entrance to conference rooms away from areas where heads down work occurs.

Recent research suggests that designing a diversity of working spaces is key to a

productive office. This allows people to choose the most appropriate space for the task at hand – whether quiet concentration, or creative interaction. Research shows that there is a 17% increase in cognitive performance for office workers who moved into a 'quiet zone' of an open workspace⁵.

Activity zoning

The interactive zone acts as a buffer between the quiet zone and the social zone. The quiet zone is typically located furthest away from the access point of the office floor. So, the deeper you venture into the office space, the quieter it gets.

The most important acoustic parameters to control open-plan offices are the amount of sound absorption material (usually in the ceiling), the use of screens, and the background noise. Room acoustics are usually characterised by the reverberation time. However, this is not sufficient for open-plan offices, as it is one of the most complex indoor acoustic environments. Speech causes the biggest distraction, office acoustics is basically the design of a speech communication system.

Acoustic design meets interior design

A study from 2015 shows the importance of focussing on the acoustical conditions in open-plan offices in order to improve employees' well-being. The outcome is that improved room acoustics positively affected employees' memory, concentration, perception of disturbances and cognitive stress.

It has been recognised that the crucial challenge facing modern workplace practitioners is providing open-plan offices in which noise distractions are minimised.

Depending on the activity, sufficient speech privacy is required in an open office space. This can be improved by shielding the source, with acoustic screens between (groups of) workplaces. These should be sufficiently high (higher than the source position) and preferably sound-absorbing. It is important to be mindful that an open-plan workspace will never provide the same level of privacy as an enclosed space.

In addition, sound-diffusing elements and absorbing elements can be fitted on the walls to limit annoying reflections. Increasing the background noise level at the receiver, for example through installations, can provide greater masking of the speech sounds of colleagues. 99% of employees reported that their concentration was impaired by poor acoustical comfort in the workplace.

www.rockfon.co.uk

Sources:

1. <https://tinyurl.com/2vxdn982>
2. www.researchgate.net/publication/258249137_Acoustics_101_for_architects
3. www.remark-group.co.uk/company-news/noise-and-wellbeing-at-work-survey-2019
4. www.slideplayer.com/slide/13964790
5. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272494415300293

A Guide to Office Acoustics

'A guide to Office Acoustics' created by FIS promotes best practice in the design and installation of acoustic solutions in offices. It encompasses the needs of a range of audiences, including first time office occupiers, clients, specialist contractors, suppliers, designers, architects and acousticians.

To read more visit:
www.thefis.org/membership-hub/publications/guide-office-acoustics



FIS AT THE WORKSPACE DESIGN SHOW

Following the huge success of the show this year, FIS is proud to once again be partnering with Workspace Design Show for 2024.



FIS will host the FIS Conference and Innovation Awards at the 2024 Workspace Design Show



Winners of the 2023 Innovation Awards

The show will take place on 27 and 28 February 2024 at the Business Design Centre in London and is a must-attend for anyone in the finishes and interiors sector.

FIS will hold its annual conference alongside the show aimed at both its members and the wider specifying community. The conference will consist of seminars and panel discussions throughout the two-day event specifically related to the finishes and interiors sector.

FIS Innovation Awards

Entry is now open for the 2024 Innovation Awards. The winners will be announced at the awards ceremony on day one of the show.

FIS Operations Director Jane Knight said: "We are looking for innovation that meets a need in the sector and has evidence of adoption or planned use in a commercial environment. By innovation, we mean the successful exploitation of new ideas and bringing creative ideas to life.

Our focus is ideas that help support improvements in efficiency, productivity, performance, quality, sustainability or perception of the finishes and interiors sector."

The awards comprise the following categories:

- Product Innovation – Fit-out
- Product Innovation – Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E)
- Digital Innovation
- Sustainable Innovation

There will also be an overall Innovation of the Year which will be decided live by the audience at the awards ceremony!

The Awards are open to all companies operating in the finishes and interiors sector, regardless of size. To qualify innovations should have been introduced to the UK market in the last five years.

You can enter online at: www.thefis.org/membership-hub/fis-awards/innovation

Interested in exhibiting?

For more information, contact clairmooney@thefis.org

Free to attend

Register for updates here

www.workspaceshow.co.uk/register-to-attend

Venue

The Workspace Design Show 2024 will be held at the Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, Islington, London, N1 0QH



Indeglas create a wonderful space for Norr11 at Clerkenwell Design Week



Deko FG New Yorker screens and Fyotto single glazed doors

The renowned Danish furniture company, Norr11, chose Indeglas to provide glazed doors and screens for their showroom space in the heart of London's Clerkenwell district.

Works were completed just in time for the company's participation in Clerkenwell Design Week, which returned to EC1, 23-25 May, showcasing thousands of cutting-edge products which will underpin many upcoming interior design projects.

As the UK's leading design festival, Clerkenwell, celebrates London's creative hub with more than 130 resident showrooms, over 200 exhibitors and new for 2023 was the 10 design destinations.

Indeglas Director, Iain McAlpine, said: "Norr11 creates sophisticated, timeless pieces on the leading edge of design and we hope that our Deko FG New Yorker screens and Fyotto single glazed doors have helped create a wonderful space that complements their mission, these are made to use, and built to last.

"It's been a pleasure to work for Sébastien Lawson and his team and we hope they had an amazing and productive week."

www.norr11.com
www.indeglass.co.uk
www.clerkenwelldesignweek.com

Saint-Gobain Weber launches new regional training programme for applicators

Saint-Gobain Weber has launched a new regional training programme focussing on upskilling applicators across the UK, starting in the north of England.

Working in conjunction with its Partner Colleges and other training academies within the wider Saint-Gobain group, Weber will be offering one day courses in different locations to make it easier for construction firms to access training. Courses will cover the latest best practice methods for applying render and external finishes, floor laying and tiling.

The training will help companies to develop the skills of their teams while establishing and growing relationships between further education providers and local employers. Weber's first course was hosted at Tyne Metropolitan College (TyneMet) on 13 April, with local tradespeople attending flooring training in the construction department of the college.

The latest figures from the CITB estimate that 224,900 extra workers will be needed to meet UK construction demand by 2027 so it is crucial that the industry not only utilises new talent coming from construction colleges from all areas of the UK, but also retain the people it already has to prevent that number from growing.

Clair Graham, the newly appointed manager of Weber's Technical Academy, said: "Our training is designed to help all tradespeople to thrive in the building industry. Whether that's students just starting out in their career or more experienced people who want to learn an additional trade or diversify their business, having access to facilities like TyneMet's and getting hands-on experience with construction products is a vital part of learning and developing their skills.

"This first trial has been a success and we hope to replicate it at other colleges and venues across the UK."

Weber already hosts regular training courses at its own Technical Academy in Flitwick, Bedfordshire, delivered by a qualified and award-winning team who are fully committed to helping combat the skills shortage within the industry. Course options include render and external finishes, tile fixing, flooring and technical mortars.

www.uk.weber/training



Training taking place at TyneMet

SAS achieves Cradle-to-Cradle Bronze Version 4.0 Certification

As part of its mission and vision to put sustainability at the centre of the business, SAS International is now Cradle to Cradle certified Bronze Level to Version 4.0. This accreditation provides SAS with the perfect

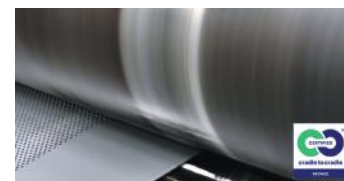
framework to be more transparent and show leadership as it starts its sustainability journey.

Gert van Doormalen, Chief Executive Officer at SAS International said: "It is just fantastic that we have achieved this Cradle to Cradle certification to Bronze level and Version 4.0 which means that we are a leading manufacturer of the ceiling industry on a global scale. One of the things that strikes me about the certification is that it's fully aligned with our company values, where we talk about transparency, expertise and sustainability, which are at the core of our business, for me those values go hand in hand with well-being."

SAS International is the first business globally to be awarded the full Cradle to Cradle certified Version 4.0 certificate covering its whole Bridgend facility and at least 75% of the products it sells. This is unique because very few applicants apply Cradle to Cradle certified principles to their entire manufacturing process as well as their products.

To learn more about the SAS Material Health and company certificates, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/2v4r4uw5>

www.sasintgroup.com
www.c2ccertified.org



50 Years of Komfort



Founded in 1973 by Barry Bates, Komfort Partitioning this year marks half a century in the partitioning business.

Jim Smith, Komfort's managing director said: "We are proud of our long-standing relationships built on service, flexibility, quality of product and technical support. Our knowledgeable and experienced specialists deliver the architect's vision through our extensive contractor network. In 2023 we are celebrating our 50th anniversary with events throughout the year and we are looking forward to the next half century!"

Barry visited the team at Komfort Crawley in February 2023 to mark the setting up of the company and to celebrate its anniversary. During his visit, Barry recounted how Komfort got its name. When asked "What is it this company will do?" he wrote on a piece of scrap card "Comfortable Offices" then crossed out the "C" and replaced it with a "K" and Komfort was Konceived.

www.komfort.com/50-years-in-partitioning-1973-2023

Earth Day: How Pexhurst is investing in our planet with Planet Mark

In April of every year, stakeholders of all backgrounds come together to advance sustainability and climate action in commemoration of Earth Day. The construction sector is unfortunately one of the largest contributors to waste and is responsible for nearly 40% of global carbon emissions, making sustainability a high priority for the industry.

Pexhurst is dedicated to minimising the environmental impact of its business operations, reducing waste and investing in green technologies. One way Pexhurst does this is through its association with sustainability certification Planet Mark.

Planet Mark is an internationally recognised sustainability certification that recognises continuous progress, encourages action, and builds an empowered community of like-minded individuals who make a world of difference.

Steve Malkin, CEO and Founder of Planet Mark said: "The next seven years, as we edge towards the Paris Agreement's checkpoint of 2030, are pivotal to the success of a more sustainable future. Organisations like Planet Mark, who certify not just on measurement but on continuous improvement, are integral in the drive towards a net zero society. At Planet Mark, we often say 'You can't manage what you don't measure.'"

Giuseppe Lo Bue, Buyer and Planet Mark Champion at Pexhurst said: "We proudly received the Planet Mark certification in October 2022.

"My role is to report our carbon and social data. This is vital as it gives us a starting point every year on how we can further reduce our carbon footprint. With help and suggestions from Planet Mark, we are achieving this. I collate Pexhurst's data every year using documentation such as utility bills, fleet, and waste and submit this to Planet Mark.

"When you see a company with this certification it shows that they are committed to reducing their carbon footprint. Pexhurst is a sustainable and forward-thinking business, making this an important accreditation for us to achieve. We want to demonstrate to all of our existing and potential clients that we are committed to the betterment of our planet."

Giuseppe concluded by saying: "From energy usage to emissions, the construction industry is having a big impact on the environment. This is why it's important by doing what we can, we will be contributing to a better world. Our ambition is to reduce our carbon footprint by five percent this year, and to be Net Zero by 2030."



www.pexhurst.co.uk
www.planetmark.com

What a day!!!!!!

Dave Loader, Sales Director at Troax, took part in the London Marathon and said: "What a day, the weather was horrendous but it didn't dampen anyone's spirits. A lot of the runners were out there raising money for worthy charities which are close to their hearts"

David explained his motivation was no different as he was running for Young Lives vs Cancer¹, a charity that supported his baby boy and his family.

Dave said: "I cannot thank you all enough, especially my Troax GB family for your support and motivation over the last six months, it has been overwhelming and I feel so blessed. If you haven't already donated and would still like to do so then please visit:

<https://lnkd.in/euMxkdW5>

"Thank you all so much. Going to take a few years off from marathons but I will be back".

Source

1. www.linkedin.com/company/younglivesvscancer



A well-deserved pint

New Blind Box System brochure from QIC

The new QIC Blind Box System brochure has been introduced to help specifiers and installers select from an extensive range of systems designed to combine blinds and a luxurious look and feel with high-performance buildings.

As well as detailing the many products and systems available it also advises on the support services available and how the systems are best installed.

The brochure details the numerous options available including various return leg options for a multitude of finishes on site.

All Blind Box systems are manufactured from the highest-quality extruded aluminium or bespoke Blind Box from sheet steel or aluminium. All surface finishes are powder coated in house for a durable finish.

As well as meeting aesthetic requirements, the optional cover plate adds to the contemporary look and feel. The new brochure also details the systems available: incorporating finishes to a wall, ceiling tile, plasterboard, and plain return options.

All systems enable ease of installation in interiors such as board rooms, lounge areas, atriums, hotel lobbies, offices, and libraries.

Matt Woollam, QIC Managing Director said: "Designers are increasingly choosing Blind Box solutions to provide an extra level of luxury for their buildings. In mainland Europe, Blind Box accounts for one in five of all specialty interior fit-out projects while in many other markets, our other products including trims, partition systems and metal mesh ceilings have quickly become an established option among architects keen to bring quality and style to contemporary environments".

www.qic-trims.com

"Great things in business are never done by one person. They're done by a team of people." – Steve Jobs

Space Interior Systems celebrates its 20-year anniversary which is a landmark achievement and one well worth celebrating.

Since 2003, Space is still delivering high-quality specialist construction projects that meet the highest standards with a reputation for excellence in everything they do.

For over two decades, the founder of Space, Nick Bond, has instilled a fundamental work ethic and demand for quality that is still present across the company today. The team continues to develop new capabilities that will drive Space towards new horizons, with many more anniversaries to come.

Guided by strong morals, experience, and attention to detail, Space's dedicated and determined teams deliver unparalleled quality on every project.

The business has grown and diversified considerably over the past 20 years, and with the support of staff, contractors, and supply chain we have endured and adapted, ready for the next 20 years!

www.space-is.co.uk



Workplace Report 'The Workplace Oooh!'

The Workplace Oooh! is a data-driven, insight-backed report which highlights and prioritises what matters in the workplace and what inspires people to perform at their best. The report is based on Claremont Group Interiors own independently commissioned research which surveyed over 1,000 UK-based office workers aged 18+ across a range of sectors to find out why people really visit the office? What could turn an OK day into a brilliant one? Does the office make your people feel productive and valued?

To read more visit: www.claremontgi.com/the-workplace-oooh

www.claremontgi.com

What next for Stortford Interiors, Chairman, Jim Nania?

Earlier this month Jim Nania, Chairman of Stortford Interiors, announced his upcoming departure from Stortford Interiors and what he plans to do next.

Jim said: "I have been reflecting on what I would like to do next in the final period of my career, as the management buyout of Stortford Interiors nears completion and full ownership passes onto Scott Shearing, Jim Sheehan and Steve Harvey.

"I have always had an ambition to finish my career helping small businesses develop their companies and several opportunities have arisen that may help me achieve that final goal.

"I have therefore agreed with the board that the transition and mentoring period is now complete and this is the right time to move on, as I sincerely believe there is little more that I would be able to add to the strong management team we have in place. I will therefore be stepping down from the business on Monday 17 July and I will be resigning as a director of Stortford Interiors and associated businesses.

"In the short term, following my resignation, I will be assisting the Board with strategic matters and some business relationships, as this final transition takes place".

Jim concluded by saying: "I can honestly say that it has been a wonderful journey (31 years) working with great people, who have all contributed to the success story of Stortford Interiors. I have made many friends with staff, suppliers and clients which I will always cherish. It is with great pride that I now hand over the business to Scott, Jim and Steve and watch them continue building an even better sustainable business.

I wish all our stakeholders a very happy and successful future."

www.stortford-interiors.com



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FIS Regional Meeting

Birmingham: 19 July

FIS Scottish Awards Lunch

voco Grand Central Hotel,
Glasgow: 15 September

FIS AGM and Regional Meeting

Hill Dickinson LLP, London:
7 November

Training Awards Lunch

Plasterers Hall, London: 21 November

FIS Regional Meeting

Manchester: 29 November

FIS Conference

Business Design Centre, London: 27 - 28 February 2024

Workspace Design Show

Business Design Centre, London: 27 - 28 February 2024

For further information of these events visit:

www.thefis.org/events



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