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CONTENTS

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NEWS, VIEWS & INSIGHTS

- 04 Industry News
- 12 Ask the Architects: L+ Architects
- 16 View Point: Luke Macnab of Feilden Clegg Bradley
- 20 International Focus
- 22 CPD Focus
- 53 Design for Healthcare & Education Supplement
- 63 Clerkenwell Design Week Show Preview

PRODUCTS

- 65 Appointments & Company News
- 67 Structural Elements
- 76 Groundworks & Drainage
- 77 External Envelope
- 97 Insulation
- 99 Heating, Ventilation & Services
- 104 Interiors
- 111 Accessibility
- 113 Safety & Security



32

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

- 23 SMARTER STORMWATER SOLUTIONS FOR EXTREME WEATHER & AMENITY
- 27 APPROACHES TO HEATING & RENEWABLES FOR THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD
- 42 EXPLORING SOLUTIONS FOR BIOPHILIC DESIGN IN COMMERCIAL SPACES
- 47 SOLUTIONS FOR LOW ENERGY DOMESTIC RETROFIT AT SCALE

PROJECT REPORT

- 32 FROM COAL BARGES TO CO-LIVING
AHMM's mixed-use development in west London is helping to redefine the role of the Grand Union Canal. Stephen Cousins reports.

FEATURES

- 55 DESIGN FOR HEALTHCARE & EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING SCHOOL DOORS
- 60 DESIGN FOR HEALTHCARE & EDUCATION A STRONG FOOTING FOR LEARNING
- 72 STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS: TIMBER THE COMMERCIAL CASE FOR BUILDING WITH TIMBER
- 93 EXTERNAL ENVELOPE: ROOFING INTEGRATING DIGITAL IN THE ROOF
- 98 INSULATION INVERTING PERCEPTIONS ON ROOFING DESIGN DECISIONS
- 100 HEATING, VENTILATION & SERVICES HEATING DESIGNS FOR LIFE
- 102 HEATING, VENTILATION & SERVICES DESIGN, DECARBONISE, DELIVER
- 112 ACCESSIBILITY ACCESS TO THE RIGHT OPTIONS



112

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FROM THE EDITOR



I recently attended a fascinating (and occasionally deliberately ‘jarring’) event looking at the potentially destabilising effects of unwanted noise in our environments. Sownd Affects, a leading consultancy in ‘audio inclusivity’ was ostensibly launching an important new acoustics-specific certification for projects, together with Oscar Acoustics. But Sownd Affects founder Marion Marinat, who lost most of his hearing at age 26, also used the opportunity to highlight the damage being done to individuals – and their productivity – by not creating audio-sensitive environments.

The stats quoted by Sownd Affects said that “bad” sound was costing businesses £40bn a year, from resulting lost productivity, staff turnover, absenteeism, and “customer attrition.” And this was a “conservative estimate,” said the firm in its launch report; potentially not taking into account the huge barriers that noisy, poorly treated or acoustically neglected environments pose to neurodiverse people.

While we have long been aware of may older people’s inability to tolerate excessive noise, likely due to losing some of their hearing, we are catching up when it comes to inclusive design which enables everyone to function to their best in workspaces. From offices, to retail, education and healthcare, the effects of treating acoustics as a ‘nice to have’ interior design element to be added at the end (if at all), can be not only hard to take from employees’ perspective, but costly to their employers in terms of resulting health impacts.

It is a depressing yet somewhat predictable stat that most people (60% of UK adults according to Sownd Affects) are negatively affected by their sound environment. But the benefits long-term can be so effective, and affecting, that it’s a shame more employers don’t put more effort in. Sownd Affects: “Audio-inclusive spaces are ones where conversation flows, focus comes easily, and no-one feels excluded or overwhelmed.” Just because it’s invisible, doesn’t mean sound isn’t incredibly pervasive, and more often than not negative, partly as its invisibility leads to it being deprioritised. Yet noise is apparently workers’ number one complaint of their interiors.

The speakers at the Sownd Certified launch included long-term anti-noise vigilante and TEDtalk veteran Julian Treasure. They used the almost visceral power of audio to agitate as well as calm the audience, including alarms heard at unexpected junctures to bring a reality to the proceedings that was highly effective. Such things in rooms with too-high reverberation and too-little zoning are even more damaging, bird sounds generally aren’t.

Sownd Affects worked closely with Oscar Acoustics on the bronze-silver-gold based sound certification system, which fills a gap in audio inclusivity standards, and which looks to have the credentials to push specifiers and clients in the right direction. Hilson Moran and architects dmfk are other consultancies closely engaged with Sownd Effects on the mission to drive a much closer focus on acoustics in new builds and retrofits, and bring some quiet to commercial interiors.

As Julian Treasure said, “when indoor environmental quality is done well, it makes people happy, but at the same time, we are open planning the entire world, for no apparent reason.” But the most challenging thing is that “everyone is unique, so designing a space for everyone is always a terrible compromise.” There are, however, sound, thoughtful approaches to consider which can help everyone.

James Parker, Editor

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ON THE COVER...

Mason & Fifth Westbourne Park, a 332-unit flexible living development built on the site of the former headquarters of London’s Licensed Taxi Drivers’ Association. Cover image © Rob Parrish
For the full report on this project, go to page 32

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ARTS & CULTURE

Nissen Richards gains planning for extension to Wiener Holocaust Library

A proposal by Nissen Richards Studio to refurbish and extend The Wiener Holocaust Library in London's Bloomsbury Conservation Area has been granted planning permission by The London Borough of Camden. The scheme will see the refurbishment of part of the existing library and the creation of a new-build 145 m² two-storey extension, containing a new gallery and learning space. The new architectural vision for the site will also see the creation of a ground-floor courtyard and a first-floor roof garden. The practice has also been commissioned to create the "interpretation and exhibition design" for the new gallery space, along with further elements throughout the existing building and new courtyard and garden spaces.

The new building will comprise a ground floor learning space, with access to a new courtyard area bridging the existing building, plus a first floor gallery looking out onto a new roof garden. The 30-seater, ground floor learning space will be for GCSE level pupils and above, as well as providing additional, flexible space for the library. The first floor gallery will feature displays that highlight key documents and objects in the library's collections, as well as telling the story of the library from the 1920s in Germany until today.

The new-build extension will be topped by a series of sculpted rooflights to allow north-facing daylight in, whilst external cladding will feature an etched metal, abstracted pattern, taken from the concept of books, documents and shelving and inspired by the library's identity as a place of research and ongoing learning.

The architects commented: "The proposed gallery spaces, material treatment and architectural features will relate directly to the work of the library, honouring those who gathered evidence in the most difficult circumstances, in order to document and record antisemitism and fascism."

New proposed works to improve the existing, four-storey Georgian terraced building are particularly focused on the entrance foyer, boardroom, reading

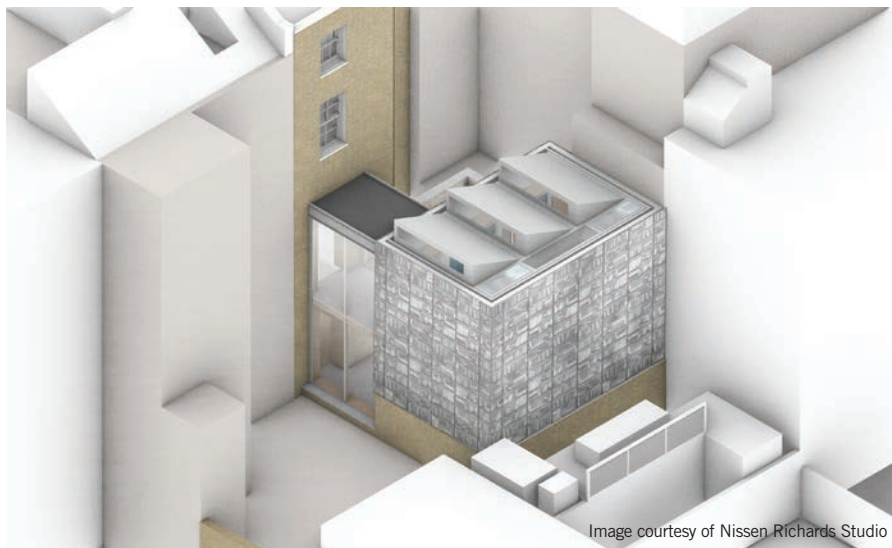


Image courtesy of Nissen Richards Studio

room and basement, and are critical for preserving archive material. A new air-handling system will also be installed.

Soft-toned timber and pale brick will represent the extension's secondary design language for the interior spaces, along with "limited colour interventions" in tones of blue. These spaces have been designed to "offer warmth, character and light and to embody a feeling of optimism, in spite of the dark and challenging nature of much of the institution's subject matter."

The new gallery exhibition will seek to explain the role of the library through history: why it was set up, what acts it has performed (and continues to perform) and why it has been historically important. It will communicate the philosophy of the library and "connect to the its core values and purpose, namely to support historical and family research, learning and engagement, teaching about the Holocaust and the Nazi era."

It will "challenge Holocaust denial and present the evidence of historic persecution and genocide, allowing the public to access critical historical resources and to deepen their understanding of this crucial historical period." As a "living, breathing archive," its role "will never be complete as it continues

to collect and share the evidence of Nazi crimes and stand against persecution."

The Wiener Holocaust Library is one of the world's leading and most extensive archives on the Holocaust, the Nazi era and related themes – and is thought to be the largest of its kind in Britain. Its origins lie in the work of Dr Alfred Wiener, who campaigned against Nazism during the 1920s and 30s and gathered evidence about antisemitism and the persecution of Jews in Germany. Dr Wiener and his family fled Germany in 1933 and settled in Amsterdam in 1934.

Later in 1934, Dr Wiener set up the Jewish Central Information Office (JCIO) at the request of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association. This archive collected information about the Nazis, which formed the basis of campaigns to undermine their activities. Wiener brought the collection to the UK in summer 1939, and is believed to have opened the day the Nazis invaded Poland.

The Library, a charity, moved to its current Grade II-listed building in 2011. The site's principal leaseholder is the University of London (comprised of UCL, Birkbeck, SOAS and The Bartlett).

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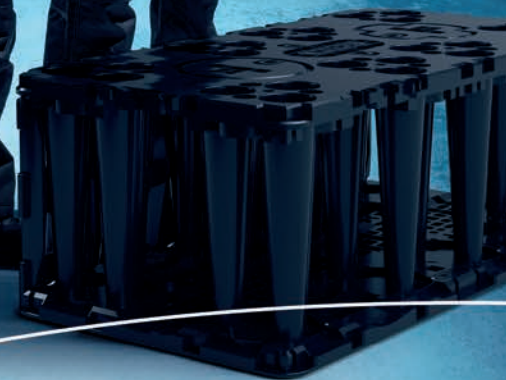
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STUDIO UPDATE

Fereday Pollard & Partners rebrands and announces new Liverpool location

Architectural and landscape design studio Fereday Pollard Architects is celebrating over 30 years in practice by rebranding as Fereday Pollard & Partners (FP&P), to reflect the long-standing commitment and contribution of its team. The practice has also announced the opening of a new location in Liverpool to establish a permanent presence for the London headquartered practice in the North West.

The rebrand reflects the collective contribution of FP&P's leadership team, architects and landscape architects, whose work is central to the delivery of complex, civil engineering-led infrastructure projects. The practice, which formed in mid-1995, now comprises a team of 45 architects and landscape architects, led by managing director Chris Pollard, with the support of four key directors, Jan Kroes, Clare Donnelly, Chris McCarthy and Jennifer Dixon.

FP&P's said its North West expansion is "designed to expand its capacity to deliver more projects in the region while continuing to contribute to nationally



significant transport and infrastructure programmes across the UK." This follows a series of major infrastructure and regeneration projects in the region for FP&P, including Bradford Interchange and the city centre pedestrianisation masterplan.

The practice developed a bespoke scheme tailored for the 2025 City of Culture, comprising a new interchange entrance, ticket hall and plaza as well as a pocket park, which together form a "much-improved gateway to the city."

MASTERPLANNING

Coalville masterplan progresses as over 55s scheme gets go-ahead

Planning permission has been granted for a new, 77-bed development in Coalville, specifically designed for over-55s, representing a "major step forward in the town's masterplan," said the architects.

Multi-disciplinary design practice, rg+p Ltd has secured planning consent for the redevelopment of land next to Baker Street in the North Leicestershire town. Working with Geda Construction for Trent & Dove, the practice has designed a proposal that will transform disused and vacant industrial land into a contemporary development to

meet the growing housing needs of our ageing population.

Made up of 77 one- and two-bed affordable social rent apartments, the project also features residents' lounges, guest accommodation, lobby, office space, buggy store, parking and extensive landscaping, including a 'spectacular sunken garden.'

The approved scheme includes new access arrangements, including an extension of Linden Way which North West Leicestershire District Council received funding to provide, sustainable

The courtyard and sunken garden will be a focal point



drainage systems and high-quality landscaping that will deliver a significant biodiversity net gain. It will also provide built-in, permanent nest brick and bat roost brick features, bee bricks, and an invertebrate hibernaculum.



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WORKPLACE

JRA 'repositions' 20 Gresham Street



Photos © Jack Hobhouse

John Robertson Architects (JRA) has completed the repositioning of 20 Gresham Street, a “key office asset” in the City of London, directly adjacent to the Guildhall complex. The refurbishment has “significantly increased the office’s amenity provision, whilst bringing the building to contemporary leasing requirements,” said the practice

Originally delivered by KPF in 2008, JRA has delivered an extensive upgrade of two office levels and repositioned the asset’s entrance hall and basement facilities. “The standout feature is the reimagining of the existing double-height ground floor entrance hall, which was dominated by a full-height sculptured travertine stone wall with full-height glazing along Gresham Street. Though impressive in scale, the space was previously echoey and unwelcoming, with its vast proportions and hard surfaces creating an austere atmosphere for users.”

JRA set out to “sensitively reposition the building as a best-in-class office environment, transforming the arrival experience while respecting the strength of the existing architecture through curated interventions and dynamic artworks.”

Central to this approach was the decision to embrace, rather than replace, the defining travertine wall. Its geological forms “informed a wider design narrative inspired by riverbeds and organic erosion patterns.” The decision to refurbish instead of overhaul also significantly reduces embodied carbon and avoids demolition waste, extending the life cycle of the existing building while aligning it

with contemporary environmental and workplace standards.

One of the immediate key challenges of the space was the poor acoustics: sound reverberated around the hard-surfaced entrance hall. In response, JRA introduced an acoustic fabric panel ceiling system with integrated metal service channels, establishing a more welcoming, “hospitality-inspired ambience that now invites visitors to gather and use the space.” This intervention also enabled a new lighting strategy, developed in collaboration with specialist consultants, Equation.

A standout feature is the addition of four travertine benches designed by renowned British artist David Worthington. These offer both a thoughtful artistic intervention and a highly functional piece of furniture, transforming the entrance into a gallery-like environment. Crafted from travertine sourced and cut from a single block at a quarry in Tuscany, the largest of the benches, measures up to 5 metres in length and weighs as much as 2.5 tonnes. “Informed by JRA’s original riverbed concept and the language of natural formations, the ‘pebble-like’ benches create an informal setting for spontaneous meetings, moments of pause and conversation.”

Providing visual interest at a low level, the benches are complemented by planted trees that contribute to biophilic wellbeing benefits, while reinforcing a connection to nature within an urban setting.

Design interventions by JRA also include bespoke furniture and a reception desk

made from the same Tuscan travertine as the sculptural benches. JRA also collaborated with artistic studio Acrylicize to create ‘Cascade’, a unifying hanging mobile of 188 pebbles that reference the concave travertine alcoves and the natural geometries of fossils and riverbed stones

The new basement end-of-trip facilities, including enhanced bicycle storage, maintenance areas, and shower and changing rooms which now benefit from access from the entrance hall with the incorporation of a new staircase. These support sustainable commuting and hybrid working patterns, and active lifestyles.

The upgrade of 5,852m² of office accommodation implements targeted interventions with maximum spatial impact. JRA’s design delivers office Levels 4 and 5 to CAT A standards, incorporating raised flooring, raft ceilings, upgraded M&E services, and significantly improved WC facilities. Office floorplates incorporate a flexible design to accommodate cellular offices, smaller meeting rooms, and zoning, allowing them to offer split tenancies. This approach allows future tenants CAT B layout flexibility, without the need for major alterations to the base build, reducing waste and supporting a sustainable, future-proof approach.

The project “demonstrates how intelligent design and the integration of thoughtful architectural and artistic interventions can elevate a workplace setting to best-in-class contemporary standards while extending the lifespan of a prominent city building.”



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ASK THE ARCHITECTS

ADF gets the lowdown on the working life of husband-and-wife team Pablo Lambrechts and Lindsey Webster, who co-founded their practice L+ Architects in 2018

WHAT DOES THE ROLE OF ARCHITECT NOW MEAN ACROSS RESIDENTIAL & WIDER SECTORS?

Pablo Lambrechts: The role now begins at feasibility and extends from urban strategy to interior detail.

Across high-end residential, mixed-use, educational, hospitality and commercial workplace projects, we are typically engaged early – testing site capacity, daylight penetration, acoustic buffering, structural spans and viability before formal language is defined.

Urban design and masterplanning shape that foundation. Movement hierarchy, public realm structure, biodiversity corridors and sustainable drainage systems are resolved alongside building massing.

My background includes engineering studies, which continue to inform how I approach structure and environmental systems as inseparable from spatial clarity. As a registered Principal Designer, safety and compliance are embedded within the design framework from inception.

At every scale – masterplan, building, interior or landscape – the responsibility is consistent: resolve complexity early and deliver environments that perform over time.

Lindsey Webster: Landscape architecture and interior design are not subsequent layers; they are formative. The quality of

daily experience is defined by proportion, light, material tactility and acoustic comfort. Integration from the outset determines success.

HAVE WELLNESS & BIOPHILIC PRINCIPLES AFFECTED YOUR WORK?

Lambrechts: Profoundly – and increasingly as a matter of professional responsibility.

We have stringent standards to prevent physical harm in buildings – structural safety, fire protection, air quality compliance. It would be unthinkable to knowingly design a space that posed measurable physical risk.

Yet mental wellbeing has historically been treated as subjective, despite growing evidence that it too is measurable.

Lighting, acoustics, air quality, thermal stability and spatial density all have quantifiable physiological effects. Blue-enriched light suppresses melatonin and disrupts circadian rhythms (Harvard Health Publishing, 2020). Chronic background noise has been linked to elevated stress and reduced cognitive performance (Evans and Johnson, 2000).

In educational buildings, reverberation times influence comprehension. In office interiors, glare and acoustic fatigue affect productivity. In residential environments, proportion and refuge influence emotional regulation.

Mental wellbeing can be assessed through lux levels, reverberation times, daylight factors, CO₂ concentration and spatial legibility. It is not abstract.

Because of my advanced study in acoustics and parametric design, we model performance rather than assume it. Spatial calm must be measurable, not rhetorical.

Wellness design therefore becomes systemic – integrating architecture, interiors and landscape to regulate rather than overload the nervous system.

Webster: Landscape reinforces this regulation. Access to green infrastructure, seasonal planting cycles, water management and microclimate influence psychological balance. Wellness is experienced across thresholds – from public realm to interior refuge.

HOW MUCH DOES BIOPHILIC DESIGN EXTEND BEYOND PLANTS & HOW DOES BIOMIMICRY AND PSYCHOLOGY INFORM YOUR WORK?

Webster: In landscape architecture, biomimicry is direct. Sustainable drainage



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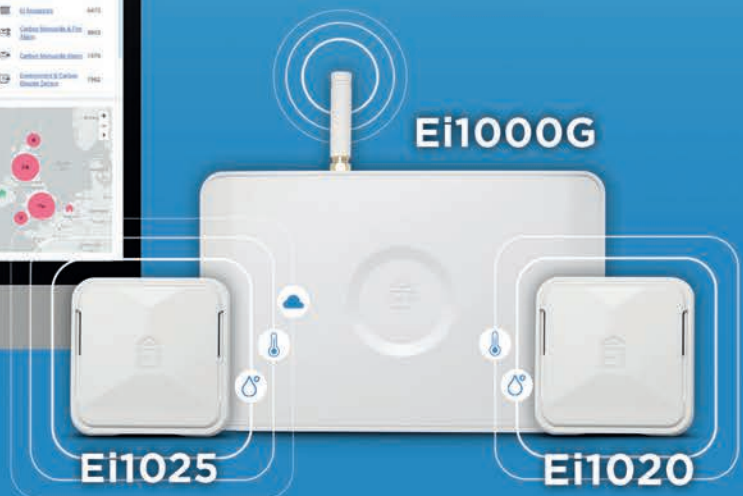
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“Wellness design becomes systemic – integrating architecture and landscape”



mimics natural water cycles. Planting structures follow ecological succession. Apparent naturalness is carefully structured.

True biophilia reduces friction between perception and environment – internally and externally.

Lambrechts: Biophilic design is often simplified to greenery. It is fundamentally about environmental coherence and human psychology.

The recognised principles include environmental features, natural forms, dynamic light, prospect and refuge, place based relationships and human nature connection.

Biomimicry deepens this thinking. Natural systems resolve load and water movement efficiently and legibly. Through parametric modelling and close collaboration with highly accomplished structural engineers, we refine spans and junctions so that complexity is resolved with precision.

Sometimes structure is expressed; often it is concealed to preserve interior calm. Excessive visual articulation or exposed services increase cognitive load. Controlled detailing and proportion reduce it.

Heritage projects reinforce this discipline. Historic buildings demonstrate human scale, structural honesty and material restraint – lessons equally relevant in contemporary mixed-use developments or hospitality interiors.

Simplicity at this level is engineered.

DOES TRUE WELLNESS-LED DESIGN INCREASE RISK?

Lambrechts: It increases responsibility. Natural ventilation strategies, exposed timber, refined structural spans, acoustically calibrated interiors and integrated landscape require rigorous coordination – particularly regarding moisture movement, fire performance and sound transmission.

Engineering literacy and Principal Designer oversight allow those complexities to be resolved safely and elegantly.

The greater long-term risk lies in delivering environments that neglect measurable wellbeing.

IS THERE A SHIFT AWAY FROM OPEN-PLAN-ABOVE-ALL-ELSE?

Lambrechts: In residential projects, yes. Open plan works well for younger families, but from early adolescence autonomy and acoustic separation become important.

We now design ‘layered’ homes – adaptable partitions, secondary lounges and defined study areas.

In workplace interiors, a similar recalibration is occurring. Open-plan offices are being replaced with varied spatial typologies – quiet zones, collaborative hubs and acoustic refuges.

Webster: Cosiness – in domestic, hospitality and landscape settings – is returning as a psychological strategy. Texture, enclosure and acoustic softness create security.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE WORK/LIFE BALANCE?

Webster: Design informs how we live, but structure is essential. I work primarily from home; Pablo works in the studio. That separation creates rhythm.

Lambrechts: Clear professional roles and disciplined boundaries sustain longevity.

AS A HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM, ARE THERE MORE PROS THAN CONS?

Lambrechts: Alignment and trust are strengths; strategic decisions are unified.

Webster: Defined roles prevent professional overlap from becoming domestic tension.

WHAT PROJECT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Lambrechts: Leading the design of the Google HQ King’s Cross remains formative. Achieving BREEAM Outstanding while maintaining spatial generosity demonstrated that environmental performance, interior experience and urban context can coexist.

Webster: Projects where architecture, interior design and landscape architecture operate seamlessly – from masterplan to material detail – are the most rewarding.

WHAT’S ONE THING THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER?

Lambrechts: Greater planning certainty at urban and building scale.

Webster: Earlier integrated consultant appointments.

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL FOR THE PRACTICE?

Lambrechts: To embed technically rigorous, wellness-led architecture and interior design across residential, mixed-use, educational, hospitality and commercial environments – integrating masterplanning, building design and landscape architecture from inception.

Webster: To continue delivering environments that feel calm, legible and enduring – where performance and experience are inseparable.

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VIEW POINT

Luke Macnab, architect at Feilden Clegg Bradley, says the potential of AI to transform design has to be balanced with ethical and environmental questions.

Heraclitus observed that change is the only constant in life. Throughout history, humans have created and refined an increasingly sophisticated array of tools to adapt and thrive. Today is no exception; it's not an overstatement to say we are living through the Artificial Intelligence Revolution.

AI can be traced back to Alan Turing's work in the 1950s, but it commanded widespread public attention when OpenAI launched ChatGPT in late 2022. Since then, its opportunities and risks have reverberated around the public sphere as global society grapples with the pace of change. As an architect, I have been watching these developments closely and find myself paradoxically excited and unsettled about their trajectory.

It is difficult to predict the full impact of AI on the profession. However, what matters most now is encouraging honest conversation, so that we move forward with clarity and intention. With that in mind, here are a series of 'provocations.'

A useful starting point is a recent study called "Labour market impacts of AI: A new measure and early evidence" (Maxim Massenkoff & Peter McCrory) which attempted to quantify the tasks that large language models could theoretically accelerate across job sectors, and compare this against real-world usage data. Two observations stood out. First, architectural and engineering professions are not yet using AI to the extent of other studied



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sectors. Second, and more significantly, they carry some of the greatest 'exposure potential' of all, i.e. the potential of AI to replace elements of those roles.

There are caveats, and this is not definitive. But if even modest efficiency gains take hold, and practices begin operating more productively, it opens the door to reconsidering how architects spend their time and how they articulate their value, a theme Keir Regan-Alexander of Arka Works has been exploring thoughtfully in the context of AI-driven practice.

This is worth examining against the current scope of the architect's role. One of architecture's enduring attractions is its multifaceted nature; the articulation and visualisation of concepts, championing a client's vision, the collaborative production of technical information, and the physical manifestation of projects in the built environment. That combination, across varying scales and typologies, makes full automation difficult, at least for now. But it also means there are numerous points at which AI tools can meaningfully enhance specific aspects: visualisation, report writing, compliance checking, environmental simulation, carbon analysis, and more.

What interests me most, though, is not efficiency alone. Collectively, these tools can foster an exciting culture of experimentation. The bar to entry for sophisticated AI applications has dropped substantially in terms of cost and ease of use, and architects who engage will find new ways of designing along with new ways of thinking about the profession itself.

Opportunities

As automation absorbs more production tasks, what remains is increasingly human-to-human connection, which is arguably what was always most important. The relational skillset of architects is well placed to lean into this, both at the individual client level and at the scale of community engagement. Meaningful co-creation with communities has traditionally sat in tension with production time, given stretched fee structures. If technology compresses production time, architects can talk more

and draft less, liberating them to apply their skills to genuine social value and creative ambition. The work of Barefoot Architects offers a compelling model for community-led projects, and I hope that the liberation of time through AI can enable more like-minded schemes.

Architects have a legacy of innovation, whether typological, material or systems based. Now, AI also enables new business structures that simply could not have existed before. A promising example of this is the startup Livedin, where the team use architectural skills combined with AI tools to connect landowners, self-builders and designers, a proposition that uses large datasets and the entrepreneurial vision to harness them. This kind of architectural entrepreneurialism is likely to grow.

Looking further ahead, the UK construction industry's persistent productivity gap is worth considering. Robotics is progressing more slowly than LLMs, but it is developing. As these systems mature, it becomes increasingly sensible to approach the design and production of the built environment more holistically, such as incorporating the opportunities of Design for Manufacture and Assembly. Companies like XKool and Dataform Lab are already exploring the built environment as a system into which AI plays a defined, human-led role, which is a model worth watching.

Responsibilities

There are therefore grounds for optimism, but alongside the opportunities there are responsibilities and challenges which I think architects, along with the global community, need to take seriously.

AI computing demands significant energy and water, a factor that cannot be ignored given the carbon intensity of the construction industry. For example, Meta's Hyperion data centre project is projected to consume the equivalent of roughly half the electricity of New York City. Data centres are already competing with communities for resources, and this will intensify. But it need not be purely extractive. Research by Prof Petter Terenius and others explores how waste heat from data centres could be productively reused. Architects, with their position at the intersection of infrastructure and community, are well placed to reimagine data centres as community assets rather than isolated burdens.

At an individual level, MIT research has explored how over reliance on

AI, delegating thinking wholesale, has measurable negative effects on cognition. There is a balance to be struck. The most productive relationship with AI is conversational, engaging with it critically, challenging its outputs, rather than simply accepting them. For a profession built on judgment, this distinction matters. Likewise, to satisfy their professional due diligence and quality control procedures, architects should be wary of delegating tasks to AI which they can't do without it.

Artificial General Intelligence

We are at a pivotal moment that extends well beyond architecture. What distinguishes this technological revolution from previous ones is not only its speed, but that intelligence itself, not merely tools, is being developed. The stated aim of the major AI companies is Artificial General Intelligence. The investment reflects this: according to OECD analysis of venture capital data, AI firms accounted for 61% of global VC investment in 2025, or \$258.7bn, representing more than double AI's share since 2022. If AGI is achieved, the implications extend far beyond how we work. They touch how we form our identities. That demands intentionality, not just adaptation.

Whatever path this revolution takes, I believe architects have a unique set of skills for navigating it, including spatial thinking, lifelong learning, problem-solving, creative thinking, teamwork, resourcefulness, and a commitment to social value. They are exactly what this moment calls for. The task now is to engage deliberately, and to help shape a future that benefits not just the profession, but everyone.

Luke Macnab is an architect and researcher at Feilden Clegg Bradley




Exterior data centre infrastructure © Sepia100



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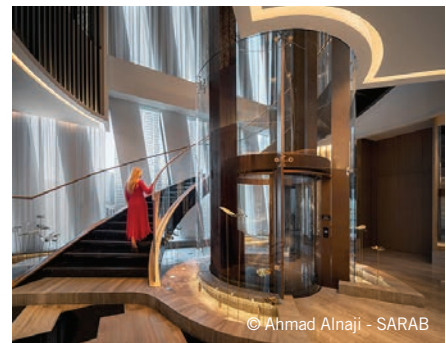
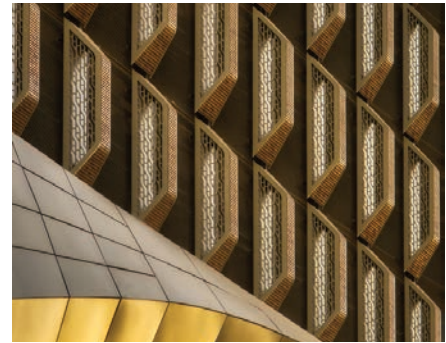
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WASL TOWER, DUBAI UNS

Wasl Tower, in downtown Dubai and designed by UNS in partnership with lead engineering consultant Werner Sobek, is now complete. Since 2013, the teams have worked with Wasl Group to create a high-rise that supports the UAE's ambition to be a key player in sustainable transformation worldwide. The architects said the “innovative, adaptable, and sustainable landmark” is a “bold expression of mobility, sustainability, and possibility.”

The Wasl Tower is a 302 metre-tall high-rise structure located adjacent to the Burj Khalifa in the heart of Dubai's city centre. Completed in late 2025, it has one of the world's tallest terracotta ceramic facades, “setting a regional standard for the use of this timeless material and its inherent sustainable properties.” The building's “responsiveness and ability to acclimatise to harsh climatic conditions by way of passive shading and cooling techniques that are articulated throughout the facade, set this building apart in the Dubai skyline,” said the architects.

UNS' design concept, including a “heat-resistant ceramic cloak,” reflects the building's connection to its unique location, with access to the metro, pedestrian walkways, and major roadways. The design adopts a ‘contrapposto’ movement, allowing the mixed-use tower to face in multiple directions and offer a constantly changing profile across the city.

Covering 167,733 m², Wasl Tower houses a diverse mixed-use programme including the Mandarin Oriental Downtown hotel, residential units, offices, and amenity spaces, plus a convention hall for ceremonies, weddings and conferences, creating a “vertical community that caters to a variety of user groups.” The design includes elevated public areas, offering “unique spaces for socialising, dining, wellness and chance encounters high above the city.”

With its completion, Wasl Tower now hosts the region's tallest building to feature a ceramic facade, with this locally traditional material “reimagined by UNS for high-rise application.” The facade operates as a “360° system, layered in response to the building's solar orientation. The ceramic fins form a “protective cloak that wraps around the tower, acting as a passive environmental filter.” Their placement and configuration, developed through parametric modelling, “balances environmental performance with aesthetics,” allowing daylight to penetrate deep into the interior while shielding incident solar heat gain. Each composite ceramic fin features a custom terracotta profile, baked with a metallic glaze that enables it to “transform visually throughout the day and seasons.”




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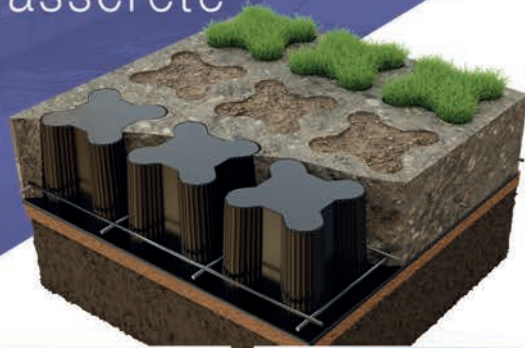
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INDUSTRY VIEWFINDER

Smarter Stormwater Solutions for Extreme Weather & Amenity

Introduction

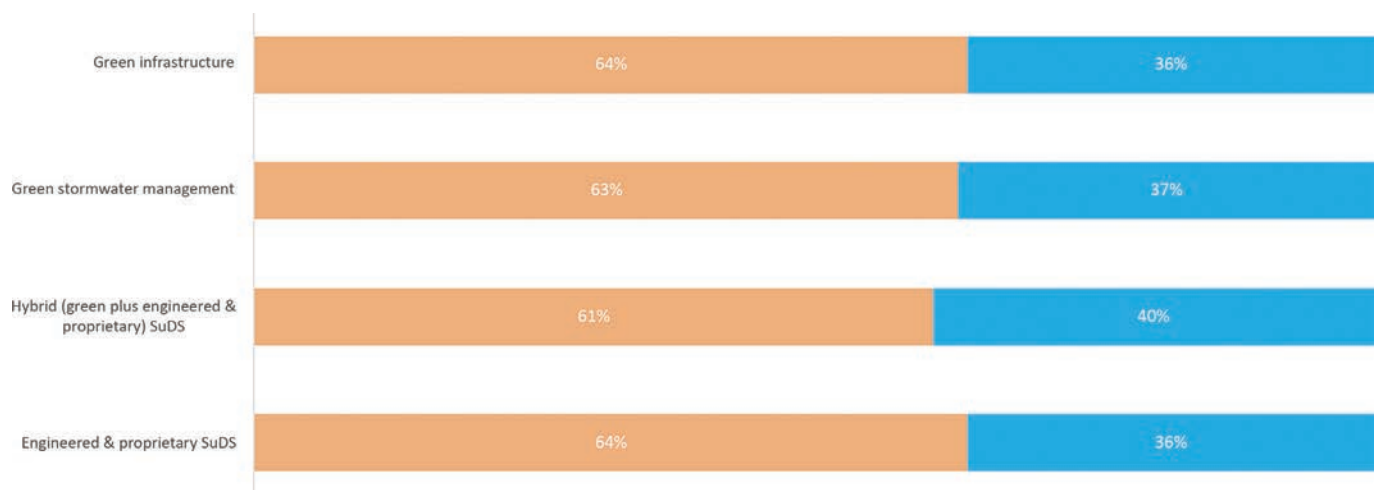
Worsening weather patterns suffered by the UK as a result of climate change, coupled with the overall increase in development has led to an increase in surface water flooding in recent years. Increased stormwater events of water quickly running off sites into surrounding rivers includes the risk of pollution being washed into watercourses, and generally overloaded drainage systems.

Stormwater management is therefore increasingly important, with the growing number of roads, pavements and buildings leaving less natural land to attenuate (hold onsite and slowly release) the increased rainfall. Managing the stormwater runoff from heavier and more frequent rainfall has become less of a 'nice to have' feature and more of a necessity, as our audience survey shows.

Following research undertaken by *Architects' Datafile* canvassing

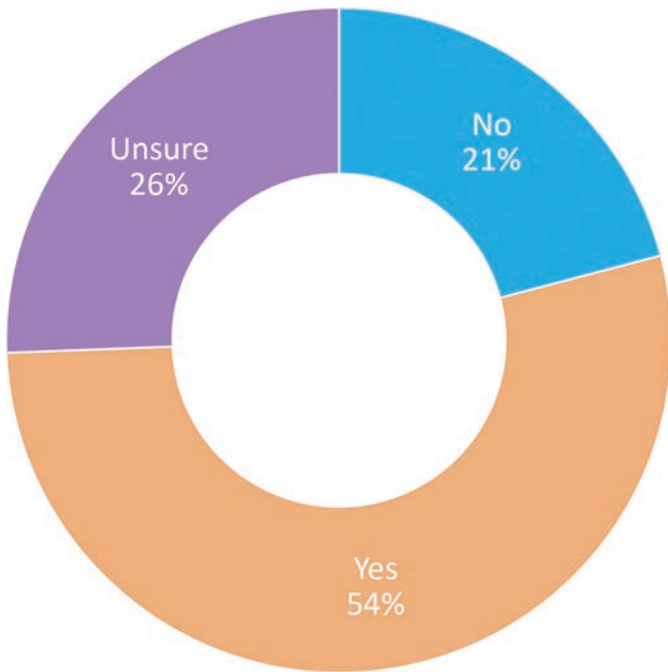
views on solutions in 2023, we have once again surveyed architects and designers to gain insight into the current landscape of stormwater management practices being specified and utilised. This included ideas on what approaches are being adopted beyond 'traditional' engineered SuDS – were more architects incorporating green infrastructure, and what are their motivations for doing so? Or do they favour a 'hybrid' approach that incorporates both natural ('green') and engineered ('grey') solutions?

This year's survey delved deeper into the topic, looking at who is responsible for stormwater management strategies, training and legislation, client engagement and awareness, misconceptions and barriers, and decision drivers. The varied findings help build a picture of industry practice; what's working, and what are the areas requiring improvement.



Are you involved with the specification of any of the following in current or recent projects? ■ Yes ■ No





Do you think that Defra's failure to implement Schedule 3 of the Floods Act to mandate SuDS (in favour of a "planning policy-based approach") means SuDS is a 'nice to have' in new schemes rather than a 'must have'?

The Government took some ostensibly decisive action following severe flooding in 2007, introducing the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act. This requires local authorities to both manage surface water flood risk and develop flood risk strategies, including for new developments. However, controversially, Defra failed to implement Schedule 3 of the Act, which was designed to require SuDS in developments – and establish SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs) within local authorities to implement schemes. Schedule 3 would also have ensured that drainage systems were designed properly, approved before construction could begin, and had a long-term maintenance plan.

Instead, in 2015 Defra introduced a watered-down approach, comprising non-statutory guidelines. SuDS became governed by planning policy guidance (the NPPF) rather than a legal requirement, with local authorities told to “encourage” the use of SuDS. Since 2015, SuDS has been a mandatory “consideration” for all major developments, though is yet to become compulsory for small developments.

Developers are required to utilise a “natural” approach to stormwater management where possible – this means mimicking natural attenuation by managing runoff at or as close to the surface as possible – and as close to source as possible – rather than relying on more traditional drainage methods comprising underground pipework. A key outcome is that surface water becomes a resource onsite, providing benefits to the environment – such as biodiversity net gain – and for users in amenity value.

SuDS approaches

Engineered and proprietary SuDS comprise pre-designed manufactured products, such as hydrodynamic separators, catch pits, geocellular systems and attenuation tanks. SuDS can also form part of a wider green infrastructure approach, incorporating a palette of features such as parks, swales, detention and retention ponds, urban wetlands, blue and green roofs, and rain gardens, all of which not only imitate natural processes but also offer wider benefits for residents and the environment alike. These can provide habitats for species and therefore contribute towards a site's biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements, and integrate more seamlessly into the landscape. However, they also often require more space, which can be particularly a difficult obstacle to overcome in tight urban environments.

As technology advances, stormwater management has also evolved to incorporate smart technologies. This can include ‘Internet of Things’-driven sensors installed in drains, pipes, ponds and tanks that monitor water depth, flow rates and water quality, and automatic opening and closing valves to prevent overflow by redirecting water flow and releasing water at controlled rates. Some systems can use weather forecasts and data to predict flood risk, react to storms and intense rainfall and subsequently optimise performance and alleviate pressure on the system. At the planning stage, a virtual replica of a drainage system can be created to simulate how the system will react and behave under different weather conditions. Unsurprisingly, these systems often have a high cost attached, and require maintenance and management.

Challenges for architects, developers, engineers and landscape consultants include client awareness and understanding of the benefits – and limitations – of systems, as can site footprint limitations and budget constraints. Regulation is also arguably not where it needs to be, with many critics agreeing enforcement is too weak and that regulations are not in line with the requirements demanded by climate change. Criticism also targets the lack of regulated maintenance once systems are in place, slow uptake of innovative smart technologies and a failure to update and retrofit old and outdated infrastructure.

Survey findings: changing strategies

In our 2026 survey, we repeated some questions we asked in our 2023 survey of architects, to gauge whether certain thoughts and specifications have changed or shifted in the past three years. The first of these was to ask architects whether they've been involved with the specification of green stormwater management, green infrastructure, engineered & proprietary SuDS, or hybrid (green plus engineered and proprietary) SuDS.

In 2023 the responses had slightly wider variances, swinging from 69% specifying green stormwater management, to 53% specifying hybrid SuDS, with green infrastructure (68%) and engineered & proprietary SuDS (61%) falling in the middle. In our more recent survey responses were more balanced, with the most selected options tied at 64% for both green infrastructure and engineered & proprietary SuDS. Only slightly fewer said they were specifying the remaining two options, which were green stormwater



management (picked by 63%), and hybrid SuDS (61%).

While the percentage shifts are all somewhat minor, it does present an overall picture that there is a slight decrease in the specification of green options with both the exclusively green options down, and a subsequent small increase in engineered & proprietary SuDS. However, the fact the changes are fairly inconsequential implies there's no immediate cause for concern for proponents of green SuDS, based on our sample. What is of more concern is the reason for the shift, whether that be site constraints, weak regulation and enforcement, or pressure to specify cheaper, quicker or simpler solutions.

The more positive takeaway from the responses to this question is the 8% increase in the number specifying hybrid SuDS, suggesting a combination of 'green' and 'grey' measures is ultimately deemed the most suitable. This was further reinforced when we asked if respondents believe a combination – such as a swales connected to stormwater attenuation tanks – is the most realistic solution for housing developments. In 2023, 85% agreed it was the most realistic specification choice, a sentiment that has dropped slightly to 71% in 2026 but is still shared by the vast majority of our architect respondent cohort.

When asked why they believe that a combination of natural and engineered SuDS was the most realistic solution, many responses referred to the lack of suitability of either system individually, with hybrid systems therefore offering the best of both. One commented: "Purely engineered systems rarely give enough placemaking benefit on their own, but purely natural systems can be hard to fit on constrained sites, so the hybrid route is the realistic one," commented one respondent, while another said: "Integrated systems give better whole-life performance because they spread the load."

Other comments referenced site constraints: "Most urban sites are too constrained for a single solution approach, so a layered strategy is the most deliverable," and that the hybrid approach appeases all stakeholders: "For housing and mixed-use work we usually need both visible landscape measures and hidden storage to satisfy planners, engineers and clients." Further comments were in similar vein: "The hybrid approach is what gets through design coordination in practice: landscape value above ground and dependable attenuation below ground," and: "It is usually the only way to reconcile planning expectations, hydraulic performance and maintainable details on compact developments."

Several respondents commented that 'green' solutions would be the ideal goal, with 'grey' options only necessary in extreme circumstances. "A combined approach gives us resilience in heavier rainfall while still delivering amenity and biodiversity value," said one, while another said: "The combination lets us design for ordinary rainfall naturally while still having engineered backup for extreme events." One said the intention should be that "grey stormwater management will only need to be used very rarely."

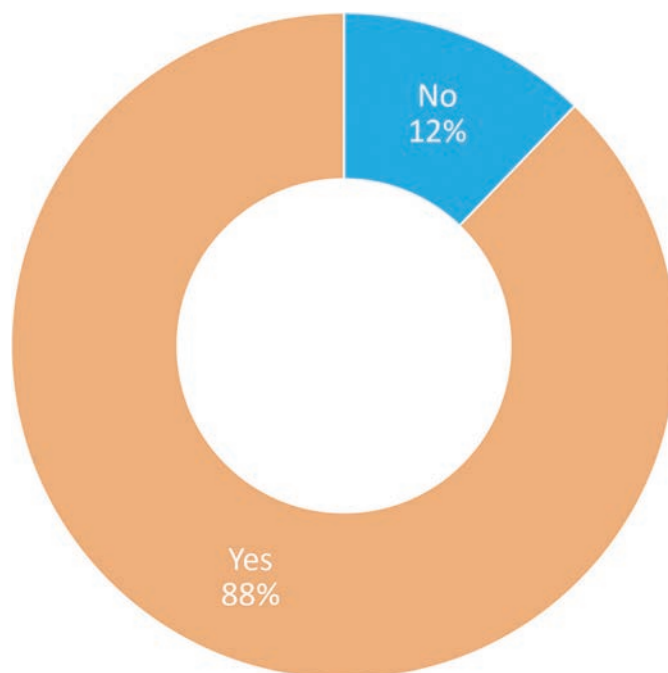
Comments received in our 2023 survey were of a similar nature, referring to site constraints, the need to satisfy planning policy, and that generally, day-to-day reliance should be on green solutions but that there is a necessity to support these with grey/engineered options in extreme weather.

The final question asked in both surveys was how important a range of factors were as drivers for including green infrastructure in developments, with respondents asked to rate each option as either 'very important', 'moderately important', 'not very important', or 'not at all important'. Unsurprisingly in both surveys stormwater management came out on top, selected as 'very important' by 78% in 2026 and 85% in 2023. Pollution control also remains a top ranking factor, with 60% rating it as 'very important' in 2026 and 73% in 2023.

The factor that's seen the biggest – and only – increase in 'very important' rankings is biodiversity net gain. While undeniably reassuring given the ever growing understanding of the need to not only protect but enhance biodiversity, it's also somewhat unsurprising given the introduction of mandatory BNG requirements in 2024.

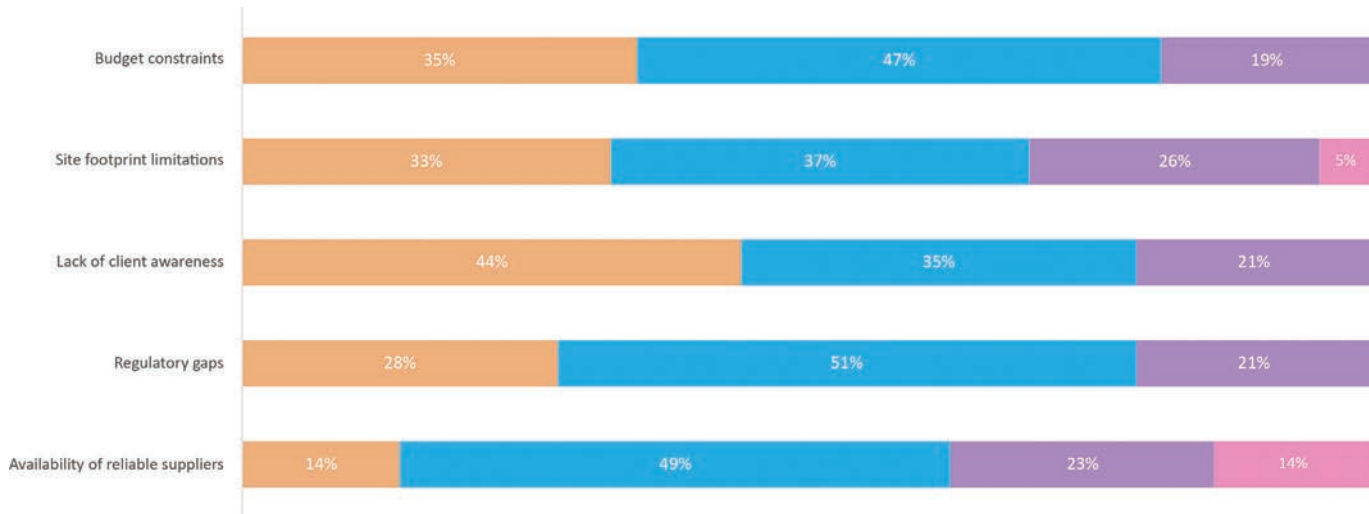
Somewhat reassuringly, all factors driving SuDS received an overwhelming majority of either 'very important' or 'moderately important' ratings across both surveys. At the other end of the scale, receiving the highest 'not very important' or 'not at all important' rankings in 2026 was user amenity with a total of 29% – increasing from 2023 when it received only 9%. This could be due to the fact other factors have become mandatory – such as BNG requirements – and thus take priority, rather than indicating that user amenity no longer matters to architects.

In 2023, the highest ranked 'not very important' or 'not at all important' factor was nutrient neutrality, with a combined total of 26%. However in 2026 this figure has decreased to 16%, indicating



Would you support mandatory requirements for including amenity-enhancing SuDS elements in urban design codes?





Are you involved with the specification of any of the above in current or recent projects? ■ Yes ■ No

that more architects are becoming aware of the importance of regulations in this regard, and the potential negative impact developments can have on the environment.

The fact all options received a largely positive ranking shows there are multiple motivations for architects to consider and specify green infrastructure, indicating a good overall understanding of the variety of benefits it can offer. With even the lowest ranked factors still receiving a majority 'very' or 'moderately important' ranking, it suggests they simply sit lower on the list of priorities.

Challenges & limitations

There are a number of challenges holding architects and designers back from fully embracing the benefits of stormwater management solutions. In particular, the solutions falling under the 'smart' or 'green' umbrellas face an array of hurdles.

We asked architects whether they viewed certain factors as a 'major limitation', 'moderate limitation', 'minor limitation', or 'no limitation' when looking at implementing smart or green stormwater solutions. Concerningly, all factors provided were majority ranked as either a major or moderate limitation, proving there is more than just one area that the industry needs to look more closely at.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, the highest ranked was budget constraints with a combined total of 82%, closely followed by both lack of client awareness and regulatory gaps, with 79% of respondents ranking both of these as either a major or moderate limitation. Furthermore, none of these factors were rated as having 'no limitation', showing architects are consistently fighting against budget restrictions, clients who are perhaps unaware or uneducated on the benefits and need for smart/green stormwater solutions, and a lack of regulation.

Not too far behind, site footprint limitations are viewed as a major or moderate limitation by 70% of respondents – unsurprising

with many having commented earlier in the survey that urban sites are often tight for space and therefore best suit a hybrid approach.

Finally, availability of reliable suppliers was ranked as a major limitation by only 14% of respondents, though a further 49% said it's a moderate limitation. It's clear that for the industry to truly move forward with its approach to stormwater management – from both an environmental and technological perspective – there are many areas that need urgently addressing.

We asked our cohort if the failure has led to SuDS being a 'nice to have' feature in new schemes, rather than a 'must have'. Over half (54%) agreed; showing the failure of SuDS being viewed as non-negotiable.

Better regulation – and education – could arrest the trend of 'planning pushback,' which 56% of our cohort said they have encountered when proposing natural SuDS features in projects. This could be due to an enduring lack of understanding of the benefits, or a concern that allocating space for them comes at the expense of other features such as housing or parking. There are also perceptions around safety and long-term maintenance to counter.

Integrating 'grey' and 'green' SuDS features sensibly is seen as the most effective way to fully benefit. We asked our cohort of architects how often they are asked by clients to integrate stormwater control features that also provide visible amenity value for end users (such as green roofs or landscaped swales). Only 7% responded with 'always'; the majority said they're only 'occasionally' asked to do this (54%), showing the unrealised potential.

The full version of the white paper includes details on preferred solutions to stormwater management challenges from amenity-rich natural solutions to practical engineered solutions for tight sites, and views on optimising project management to bring SuDS in at an early stage, and the importance of regulation. The document can be downloaded free at our Insights portal: insights.netmagmedia.co.uk




 Round table chair,
James Parker

Approaches to Heating & Renewables for Future Homes Standard Compliance



With the Future Homes Standard (FHS)'s publication only 24 hours old, netMAGmedia staged the first of two Building Insights LIVE round tables in London, to look at the realities of heating and renewables compliance with the new standard. The event was sponsored by Panasonic Heating & Ventilation, WMS Underfloor Heating, Garo Electric, Recoup Energy Solutions and Envirovent, and heard valuable contributions from all firms' representatives.

We had a broad base of attendees – collectively tasked with delivering a new level of heating as well as general energy efficiency to achieve much lower carbon emissions. We were joined by housebuilders giving key practical insights, as well as leading academics sharing research, and consultants and industry bodies offering their own perspectives and expertise.

The Government's consultation response was launched on

24 March after a long delay (and the Standard will not be implemented until March 2027). But delegates were finally able to assess its actual provisions for the industry, as well as the revised Building Regulations Parts L and F. A chief concern for the heating and renewables side was the 'functional' requirement for 40% of new homes' ground floor area to be delivered by roof-mounted solar PV. There was some consternation this cannot be traded off against other elements in designs, so is seen to compromise the position of the other elements in the chosen Option 1 (mechanical ventilation, higher air-tightness and waste water heat recovery).

Battery storage of PV-generated electricity is conspicuous by its absence in the published consultation response (like embodied carbon). Our delegates were broadly critical of this, and other key flaws within the long-awaited FHS. There were a range of views on the PV issue, including on whether kilowatts should instead be used

CHAIR

James Parker, Managing Editor, Architects' Datafile/
Housebuilder & Developer

ATTENDEES

- **Dr Jaydeep Bhadra**, Domestic Sector Technical Manager, CIBSE
- **Richard Lupo**, Managing Director, Shift Environment
- **Prof Lubo Jankovic**, Professor of Energy and Buildings, Energy House Labs, University of Salford
- **Jonathan Cheng**, Sustainability Manager, Dandara
- **Dan Jestico**, Director, Sustainable Design, Savills
- **Mike Leonard**, Visiting Professor, Birmingham City University, Centre for Future Homes
- **Abigail Woolf**, Senior Energy and Carbon Advisor, UKGBC
- **Greg Jones**, Residential Sector Lead, Hoare Lea
- **Ian Pritchett**, Co-Founder, Greencore Housing

SPONSORS' ATTENDEES

- **Mike Jones**, National Specification Manager, Garo Electric
- **Nathan Tranter**, Head of Heating, Panasonic Heating & Ventilation
- **Ronny Reeves**, Business Development Director, WMS
- **Ellis Maginn**, Technical, Design & Specification Solutions, Recoup Energy Solutions
- **Larry Soper**, Technical Services Manager, Envirovent

as the target measure, not a percentage, and exemptions to the 40% area functional requirement. Some suggested that this would need to be further revised before the introduction of the Home Energy Model, due to eventually replace SAP, which is expected in summer 2026. Delegates said the lack of battery storage requirement was a major missed opportunity for bringing resilience in an uncertain energy security context, including the ongoing Iran conflict.

The two-year 'dual running period' of SAP 10.3 alongside HEM was a cause for concern, as were inaccurate assumptions on energy and water consumption built into HEM (in comparison with SAP). Further issues were highlighted around the 'notional building' model such as using the 'target emissions rate' (TER) rather than the more detailed 'energy use intensity' (EUI) metric.

The chair asked whether HEM as it stood needed to be evolved further to be fully workable for the industry. Could incorrect assumptions lead to more performance gaps between as-designed and as-built homes? Jonathan Cheng of housebuilder Dandara said that while the Standard had brought some clarity, "the uncertainty is around the SAP software side of things; that's the next step in terms of giving us answers around forms of heating and hot water generation." He said that in the meantime, as the industry waits for HEM, Dandara had been "preparing different scenarios."

While it will be introduced as an iterative process, it was

currently flawed, said attendees. Ian Pritchett of Greencore Homes said it was "the elephant in the room." While the nascent software will "learn over time," he said it is "likely to be a little inaccurate and underestimate unregulated energy, and could lull us all into a false sense of security, thinking we're hitting low energy use intensities."

HEM is currently thought to assume people shower around 2.5 times per week – reportedly based on old data from one manufacturer. Ellis Maginn of sponsor Recoup commented: "Occupancy and frequency of showering are absolutely key for [carbon] impact. The HEM model doesn't look representative currently, even less so than SAP, which we would argue wasn't fully realistic based on a lot of studies." He criticised the "narrative" from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, who "said that they've been speaking with industry" but from Recoup, plus competitors' Showersave and Triton's perspective, they "have not had any engagement." He said "it feels like the user point of view has been overlooked."

Jaydeep Bhadra, representing CIBSE, said they had raised concerns in the consultation around "asking people to put MVHR in, when the notional building doesn't account for air permeability or air tightness," and it should be closer to Passivhaus.

Larry Soper from sponsor Envirovent focused minds on the performance gap, saying that in the case of air permeability, the designed and as-built "can be two totally different things." He said it is "key" that if MVHR is being included and the permeability is below three, the as-built "needs to be as close to that as possible."

Continued use of SAP 10.3 could create another possible mismatch between overall design and built performance, as the minimum Seasonal Coefficient of Performance of heat pumps in SAP is 2.5, which is far below the potential of current units.

Abigail Woolf of UKGBC and others said the 40% of ground floor area PV requirement in the 'notional building' was an obstacle which was hampering specification of innovative solutions. She said that putting the functional PV limits "slightly less" than the notional limits would be a possible remedy to incentivise "energy demand management or heat pump efficiency."

Dan Jestico of Savills said that further clarity was needed, based on the chair's question around the ambiguity of including a "reasonable" amount of PV as the criteria for whether it is viable on a development within the Standard, with the loophole of no PV if this isn't possible. "What is deemed an acceptable level of mitigation or compliance is the kind of detail that everyone will be looking at." He added: "If what is a reasonable amount is kilowatt hour production, and you can't get enough PV to get over a certain threshold, I presume that will be the exemption, rather than the 40% figure."

Solutions & sponsors' question time

The second half of the debate was given over to exploring five crucial areas of specification which were represented by our sponsors - namely electricity supply resilience, air source heat pumps (ASHPs), underfloor heating (UFH), wastewater heat recovery (WWHR), and ventilation. All asked pertinent questions to the group, including around the resilience challenges on electricity.



HEATING SOLUTIONS FOR ALL HOMES

The varied experience of delegates (from academia, the product supply chain, housebuilding and industry bodies CIBSE and UKGBC) helped provide a rich set of perspectives on strategies for complying with heating and renewables requirements of the new Standard

Mike Jones of Garo Electric posed the core issue for future proofing schemes against electricity grid constraints: “how are housebuilders rethinking electrical infrastructure design – particularly consumer units, protection devices, and spare capacity,” with homes now to be equipped with heat pumps, PV, battery storage, and EV charging.

He added that he was “shocked to know that there’s no specification whatsoever [in the Future Homes Standard] for what battery storage goes into a home – manufacturer, size, anything.” He warned that currently, installers will put in a 4 kW battery; but “really each house takes more than 5 kW a day.” The group critiqued the lack of focus on battery storage in the document, Jones’ asserted that future proofing was essential for example to tackle future demands on the grid meaning the Government decided it needed all electricity generated on sites, in that scenario “somebody has to go back and change things.”

Nathan Tranter, of sponsor Panasonic Heating & Ventilation, said that the solution to balancing demand was for “everything to speak each other – the heat pump speaks to the tumble dryer.” This Internet Of Things-based Home Energy Management Systems approach is already happening, he said, adding that the industry was awaiting energy providers releasing an API (Application Programming Interface) “which will speak to the grid, and say ‘we are producing too much electricity, let’s dump some in the batteries.’” He said it was already happening in Germany, and “wasn’t far away.”

Mike Jones of Garo Electric said that “every new build should

have battery storage,” however this sort of prescription was currently absent in the Future Homes Standard. Ian Pritchett of Greencore Homes said that the “challenge with future proofing is the future keeps changing, and it’s changing quite fast at the moment.” He gave the example of exported energy prices being substantially higher for some homeowners selling back to the grid than the 13p per unit commonly quoted.

Pritchett added: “We’ve got to think about houses completely differently, it’s not just about load shifting and storing energy, they will become income generators as well.” Meanwhile, Mike Leonard of Birmingham University said that the long view on PVs for homeowners meant looking at “what’s the product’s life span, does it have to be changed – and what is the embodied carbon of that?”

Underfloor heating

Ronny Reeves of sponsor WMS asked the group whether, if the Standard was “genuinely about reducing carbon emissions and cutting energy bills for homeowners,” not just hitting a “target number,” the sector should be looking to move to specifying lower temperature water for heating homes. “If air source heat pumps deliver a far higher SCOP (Seasonal Coefficient of Performance) at 35-45°C than at 55°C, should we be designing and building to lower temperatures?”

Reeves said that his firm’s goal was to work with the sector to drive up efficiency, and added that the ‘buildability’ of the UFH solution for volume housebuilders was evidenced by Barratt having



HOT OFF THE PRESS: REVIEWING THE STANDARD'S IMPACT

(Left to right), round table Chair & *ADF* Editor, James Parker; Abigail Woolf, Senior Energy and Carbon Advisor, UKGBC; Dr Jaydeep Bhadra, Domestic Sector Technical Manager, CIBSE; Mike Jones, National Specification Manager, Garo Electric (event sponsor), Greg Jones, Residential Sector Lead, Hoare Lea

recently adopted it on ground floors in many of its developments, following testing at Energy House 2.0 in Salford. A report from the Energy House chamber test countered ideas that lower water temperatures necessitated oversized radiators upstairs (the UFH increased the temperature on the level above too).

Jonathan Cheng of Dandara offered the potential hiccup for mainstream adoption, that people still “view underfloor heating as a premium product.” He added: “In one sense that’s a good thing for the housebuilder, because the homeowner expects to pay more for it, but the cost to the house builder has become more comparable.”

Ronny Reeves said the cost of UFH was coming down as volume of spec increases, while asserting that the cost of radiators was increasing. He asserted the cost was offset by “added benefits for the housebuilder in terms of saving time on installation, and reduced maintenance,” citing particular relevance for housing associations.

Cheng said that there was still general “reluctance in the sector to say, ‘let’s go in this direction,’” fuelled by worries about “a lot of aftercare.” Mike Leonard cited a positive case study by Keepmoat of heat pumps plus UFH at Gedling Green, saying customers were happy based on overall comfort, and lack of radiators.

Air source heat pumps

Nathan Tranter of Panasonic framed his question simply around the need to educate installers: “How can we help educate our existing network of installers onsite to now install new technologies such as ASHPs when they have only been focused on gas boilers?”

Tranter pointed out that with a “lot of new technology coming online for new homes, electricians haven’t really fully looked into how to install them.” He wondered whether a “whole certificate matrix was needed for installers,” so they fully understood how

to install but “most importantly how to commission them,” and warranties should be dependent on such certificates. This was a point echoed by Greg Jones of Hoare Lea, who added that there might be “a different solution altogether” for urban high-rises. There was extended discussion of training approaches for installers, including Jaydeep Bhadra of CIBSE who said the Building Safety have recently formed a working group on heating and heating controls, which has the aim of “developing a training course which every institute can follow.” He said CIBSE and the Heat Pump Association were collaborating with the Regulator to “streamline this training and get it accredited.”

Dan Jestic of Savills said there was “probably a huge amount we could learn [from countries like Germany who have widely embraced heat pumps], in terms of installers and commissioning, and persistent problems and things to look out for.” He added: “The knowledge exists.”

The debate around heat pumps also ventured into the potential to run at lower temperatures than the common 55°C, which would not only reap carbon savings for developments but better EPC scores for homeowners. Our delegates emphasised it would not harm performance for end users either (the average shower temperature is between 37°C and 41°C).

Nathan Tranter commented that on new builds, Panasonic was generally designing at 45°C, but said “the lower, the better.” He said the UK would do well to follow Europe on designing for lower water temperatures for higher pump efficiencies. He admitted that radiator size “has always been a barrier, but cited initiatives Panasonic had been pursuing using standard 15 mm pipe connected to fan coils: “I can drop to 35°C and the radiator’s smaller than it would be for a gas boiler.” The panel also looked at the potential for heat pumps to work in reverse in future, overheating will “become dominant in future,” said Lubo Jankovich, and using heat pumps for cooling with light fan coils was the preference rather than “larger and larger radiators.”

Waste water heat recovery

Ellis Maginn of Recoup Energy Solutions reviewed the uptake of the simple method for recovering heat from showers, given that heating water is set to become the biggest source of emissions in new homes. He asked whether the FHS plus the move towards electrification “prioritised hot water demand reduction sufficiently? And, does the current policy pathway allow for innovation in hot water production and demand reduction?”

He said manufacturers were launching sophisticated ‘modulating’ electric showers, but Recoup’s new product had been languishing in the Appendix Q process with DESNZ for around 18 months, with “no definitive end date.” On the plus side, he confirmed that WWHR was being adopted by housebuilders large and small, from Bellway Homes to Greencore (present at the debate).

Ventilation

Larry Soper of Envirovent asked the pertinent question, in the light of our warming environment and increasingly air tight dwellings: “How will the Future Homes Standard change how we ventilate dwellings?” He said robust ventilation strategy remained the

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDUSTRY & GOVERNMENT

- **Abigail Woolf, UKGBC:** Include and regulate embodied carbon. The functional PV limits could be slightly less than the notional limits to allow innovation.
- **Dr Jaydeep Bhadra, CIBSE:** Revisit the metric used; energy use intensity is a better metric.
- **Ronny Reeves, WMS:** Keep the homeowner at the heart; and would love to see us designing to 40°C flow.
- **Richard Lupo, Shift Environment:** Post occupancy evaluation; housing associations have really good data.
- **Mike Jones, Garo Electric:** It would be great if we could futureproof power distribution more.
- **Prof Lubo Jankovic, University of Salford:** Embodied carbon needs to be regulated, PV efficiency instead of floor area, and constant set temperatures instead of intermittent temperatures. Also, consider positive health consequences of MVHR, and use hourly assessment of performance not monthly average.
- **Jonathan Cheng, Dandara:** Focus more on quality; of design, install, commissioning, and delivering a system that works with the occupier, and is not so complex.
- **Nathan Tranter, Panasonic Heating & Ventilation:** We want one heating zone for properties over 150 m² – more water value, more efficient.
- **Dan Jestico, Savills:** Retain the ability for local authorities to go beyond FHS in the new NPPF.
- **Mike Leonard, Birmingham City University:** Put the customer at the heart of this journey.
- **Larry Soper, Envirovent:** Ensure whatever's specified in the design is what's in the completed house.
- **Greg Jones, Hoare Lea:** Be very cautious about predicting energy use, and have scenario testing so users understand likely product performance.
- **Ellis Maginn, Recoup Energy Solutions:** Integrate innovation better into modelling: the Appendix Q pathway doesn't feel fit for purpose currently.
- **Ian Pritchett, Greencore Housing:** This is not the last set of regulations that we'll see; so try to encourage a holistic approach and legislate outcomes, rather than technologies. Also, correct issues and update as quickly as possible.

“forgotten service,” as it was “easier to put a cheap fan in or trickle vents.” The new version of Part F launched alongside the Future Homes Standard was a mixed bag, he said: “It will push a lot more in the competence.”

Richard Lupo said that claims against social housing providers were a risk as overheating became more prevalent, in the wake of the new Part O. “We’ve had clients with residents doing disrepair claims because their apartments are too hot and they can’t cool them down.”



MULTI-DISCIPLINARY

The round table was held in the historic surroundings of Asia House in London, and featured five sponsor representatives offering real-world insights

Mike Leonard from Birmingham City University shared the view that the Future Homes Standard was in fact the ‘Current Homes Standard,’ and that in 20 years, “overheating will be as big a problem as underheating is today,” while Prof Jankovich suggested this timescale was optimistic, and that Part O “needed evolution.” Leonard agreed ventilation was the “Cinderella of the industry,” and a “different approach was needed from developers, whether it’s market-led or regulation led.” He said: “We need to be thinking about centralised systems, whole house systems; we owe that to the public really, because air quality has a big impact on health and wellbeing, and we should be producing not just energy efficient homes, but healthy homes.”

Larry Soper attempted to manage industry expectations on the potential of cooling using heat pumps combined with mechanical ventilation on some domestic sites, due to noise impacts.

Conclusion: getting buyers on board

Delegates homed in on the need to educate homebuyers on new technologies, and manage expectations. This would be crucial not only for building the reputation of tech such as heat pumps, but also helping counter a lack of trust in the industry among the public.

Jonathan Cheng of Dandara said we had to design around consumers’ needs: “We can upskill people to use their homes in a different way, because the technology is different; it’s more complex, there’s more to understand.” However, he added: “Should we take a step back and try to understand users’ expectations?”

With the Department having expressly stated its will to “re-engage with industry,” our round table showed why they need to pay attention to such groups. As we approach HEM’s launch, the centre needs to hear candid cross-industry views on real-world impacts, if it hopes to get it ‘right first time.’



Photos © Rob Parrish

MASON & FIFTH WESTBOURNE PARK
LONDON

From coal barges to co-living

AHMM's mixed-use development in west London is helping to redefine the role of the Grand Union Canal, connecting heritage inspiration with modern co-living approaches. Stephen Cousins reports.

Stretching for over 137 miles, the Grand Union Canal was once a crucial artery linking the industrial Midlands with London, used to transport coal and iron to drive the Industrial Revolution and, in the 1920s and 30s, bringing sand, gravel, and timber by barge to the capital to build out new suburbs.

Commercial traffic ceased on most of the network in the 1970s, and today the stretch of waterway passing through London is a much more tranquil affair, used primarily for boating, walking and cycling, serving as a scenic backdrop for a growing community of narrowboat owners.

A programme of major redevelopment along the canal is transforming many brownfield and underused industrial sites into mixed-use, residential-focused hubs. The latest of these is Mason & Fifth Westbourne Park, a 332-unit flexible living development built on the site of the former headquarters of London's Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association.

Designed by AHMM and interior architect TiggColl for investment manager Cheyne Capital, the scheme is operated by boutique co-living provider Mason & Fifth. It comprises a cluster of blocks, ranging from four to 12 storeys, wrapped around an urban courtyard that opens onto the canal.

The development aims to foster a new community of young creatives and entrepreneurs, by offering a combination

of short and long stay accommodation and multiple amenity spaces. Publicly accessible amenities are woven into the ground and lower ground floors to make the development relevant and accessible to local residents.

The varied urban context, characterised by cobbled streets with small scale offices and residential, the huge concrete canopy of the A40 Westway dual carriageway and the canal itself, were key inspirations for the building's exterior form, colours and materials.

According to Hazel Joseph, director at AHMM, the need to "respect the materiality and domestic scale of neighbouring buildings" informed the decision to design "a series of three smaller buildings" along the street, rather than a singular frontage and extensive use of brick and Crittal-style windows. To the south, a 12-storey tower and a public space with tiered seating make more of a physical impact "marking out the Mason and Fifth hotel from the Westway and those more southerly views."

Joseph adds: "When you walk around the site, it's very different depending on where you look, the spaces and the vistas open up as you move through it."

Community living

Westbourne Park is London-based Mason & Fifth's third property built around the



concept of flexible stays, and is its biggest to date. The Westbourne Park scheme combines the functions of a traditional hotel with residences and short stays.

The building was originally designed by AHMM for co-living operator The Collective and planning permission was granted in 2019. The Collective fell into administration in 2021, and Cheyne Capital ultimately teamed up with Mason & Fifth to deliver the revised final project.

“It was always considered to be a very mixed use scheme, combining places for people to stay and work, with a significant quantity of leisure and amenity,” says Hazel Joseph, adding that the project was subsequently honed for Mason & Fifth to meet “the level of amenity and the provision of affordable workspace and community space” that it needed.

Westbourne Park targets an increasing demographic of mobile workers attracted to London’s thriving creative and technology

sectors, acting as a one-stop-shop for all their needs. The development provides 332 private studios and a range of spaces for work and leisure activities, including exhibitions, performance, classes, and eating and drinking facilities.

Studio sizes range from 12-14 m² for a small unit up to 20-30 m² for the largest units, and all are furnished, and feature an ensuite bathroom with a waterfall shower. A finished floor level to ceiling height of around 2.8 metres ensures a consistent facade expression and maximises natural daylight penetration.

On a typical floor, rooms are positioned around the central courtyard space, extending to the south west corner of the site, and served by north and south stair and lift cores. An additional escape staircore on the north east corner emerges onto Woodfield Road.

Communal spaces are spread across three floors – two at the base of the building, the

REVISIT

The building was originally designed by AHMM for co-living operator The Collective, but after it fell into administration in 2021, Cheyne Capital teamed up with Mason & Fifth to deliver a revisited design
Plans © AHMM





third at penthouse level.

At street level, the main entrance and reception lounge open directly onto the courtyard, there's also a listening room and a co-working lounge with an external terrace overlooking the canal. A cycle workshop and food and beverage shops animate the courtyard edge, and to the north, commercial workspace spans two levels with primary access from Woodfield Road.

A floor down, at canal level, a restaurant to the south east of the site sits alongside a cinema room. Underneath the courtyard, is wellness suite with a swimming pool, sauna, steam rooms and a gym extends under the courtyard.

According to Joseph, the courtyard roof, which forms the soffit to the spa

below, was a particular technical challenge for designers due to the significant loads involved and the need to integrate rooflights and related waterproofing details.

Also at canal level, a pavilion on the south western edge houses two levels of affordable workspace and a flexible events space.

Residents on the 10th storey of the tower have access to shared kitchen and dining areas, and a lounge with views onto the canal.

The site plan for Westbourne Park is split along the north-south axis by a new public route connecting the road to the canalside, which widens as it descends via a staircase to the water. The route functions as the entrance to the scheme, penetrating the brick facade at street level and bringing

“It was always considered to be a very mixed use scheme, combining places for people to stay and work, with a significant quantity of leisure and amenity”

Hazel Joseph, AHMM



The plan is split along the north-south axis by a new public route connecting the road to the canalside

visitors into the new courtyard, which is recessed and partially hidden from the street to create a sense of an unexpected discovery in the heart of the old city.

The route opens out as it descends to the tow path, incorporating areas of tiered seating alongside the staircase and offering attractive views of the waterway and newly planted trees, which partially screen the Westway trunk route along the south edge.

Historic – with a bit of grit

The historically and materially diverse local urban context provided a treasure trove of inspiration for AHMM. The site is located within the Maida Hill neighbourhood, near Notting Hill, on Woodfield Road, and extends back to the Grand Union Canal tow path to the south. Buildings on the

street include a mix of residential, offices, light industrial buildings, two pubs and the headquarters of a local arts company.

Large buildings occupy the east and west flanks: Grand Union Close, a four-to-five storey mid-century housing development and Hathaway House, a new mixed-use development with a five storey block fronting Woodfield Road and 14-storey residential tower and five-storey office block fronting the canal. On the opposite side of the canal, the single-storey red brick and metal louvred facade of Westbourne Park bus garage is heavily graffitied, revealing a grittier side to this part of the city.

The small-scale urban fabric of the street, which rarely exceeds five storeys, juxtaposed against the large scale presence of the canal and the Westway, which almost





forms a second horizon just 40 metres away at the southern corner of the site, informed AHMM's decision to subdivide the building into seven distinct blocks.

Three smaller blocks face the streetfront, three are positioned behind and the higher density tower is positioned at the back, close to the canal where it is less visible to local residents.

The massing was also a strategic move aimed at repairing the urban fabric by restoring the continuity of the street edge, completing the line of urban blocks to the east and west of the site, and reinstating a coherent perimeter structure.

"The project has lots of neighbours who, through consultation, had concerns about the form of the building, and how that was going to impact on their daily life," says Hazel Joseph, "We had to work quite hard on how to respond to issues with overlooking, noise and light pollution."

Following consultation with residents and Westminster City Council, the height of the tower was reduced from the originally proposed 16 storeys to 12 storeys, it was also reshaped to reduce its mass and the position was moved away from the more sensitive residential properties.

In addition, setbacks at upper levels on the three street-facing blocks were introduced to protect daylight to properties directly opposite.

The westerly facade also "steps back and has very deep reveals with planted window boxes so that residents concerned about overlooking would have some sort of screening and veiling to minimise that issue," says Joseph.

Vernacular response

The architectural fabric of the surrounding area reflects its 19th and early 20th century origins, featuring multiple variations of red and yellow London brick, along with a preponderance for industrial steelwork.

The material strategy for Westbourne Park was shaped by this palette with a strong focus on brick. Variation was introduced through detailing techniques, such as changing brick reveal depths and bonding patterns, spandrel treatments, and perforated metal screening, helping create a complex architectural language.

Along Woodfield Road, the facade are rhythmically ordered to reflect the finer urban grain with three different bricks specified to give each of the blocks a unique character. "It was about both creating a

composition across the front and sitting comfortably into the historic context,” says Joseph.

Facade detailing on the canal-facing elevations is bolder and more vertically expressive. On the eastern boundary, facing Grand Union Close, it is softer with smaller, more deeply-recessed windows.

Faience glazed cladding is a common feature on London Underground stations, and in this area of West London an emerald green variety adorns various industrial buildings and public houses.

This was the jumping off point for AHMM’s decision to specify profiled green terracotta tiles on the pavilion block to give it a distinct architectural identity and help define its function as a civic space used for

events and affordable workspace.

“The different materiality speaks to the internal functional programme, it also bounces the southern light around the scheme, creating a bit of variety within the complex of buildings,” says Joseph.

Large-format glazed openings on the pavilion maximise transparency and provide direct visual connections between the interior and the adjacent canalside public realm.

The colour green also finds expression in terracotta spandrel panels used selectively across the tower and the block to the west of the courtyard, creating more points of contrast and responding to the more industrial character of the courtyard and canal-side setting.

DIVERSE MIX

The development provides 332 private studios and a range of spaces for work and leisure activities
© Rob Parrish





PROJECT FACTFILE

Architect: Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

Interior architect: TiggColl

Creative director: Mason & Fifth
Design Studio

Client: Cheyne Capital

Operator: Mason & Fifth

Structural engineer: MCR Consulting
Engineers

M&E consultant: Caldwell Consulting
Engineers

Landscape consultant: David Clarke
Landscaping

Acoustic consultant: Adnitt Acoustics

Fire engineer: Jenson Hughes

Planning consultant: First Plan

Project manager: Quartz Project
Services

CDM co-ordinator: Hasco

Approved building inspector: Socotec

Main contractor: McAleer and Rushe

Other external treatments designed to emphasise the waterside context include a mirrored stainless steel soffit on the passage forming the start of the pedestrian route to the canal. As light changes throughout the day, the surface disperses natural light, enhancing visibility and animating the entrance zone.

“This textured, reflective material references the rippling water and provides a really nice moment in the project, bouncing light around a space that would otherwise feel quite compressed,” says Joseph.

Efforts to increase the connection with nature extended to tree planting, green roofs and the inclusion of permeable surfaces, helping boost the project’s biodiversity and water management credentials. The design pre-dates the 10% minimum Biodiversity Net Gain requirements introduced in 2024, but it nevertheless created a “significant uplift on the limited baseline” of a site covered by hard concrete surfaces, Joseph adds.

“This textured, reflective material references the rippling water and provides a really nice moment, bouncing light around a space that would otherwise feel quite compressed”

Hazel Joseph, AHMM

The landscape strategy, alongside efforts to design internal and external spaces and amenities sensitive to the needs of the local community elevate Westbourne Park to more than just another mixed-use destination. In creating a permeable, animated new edge to the canal, it supports not just social exchange, but a renewed connection to one of Britain’s most important historic waterways. ■



MEADOW



Round table co-chairs James Parker and Oliver Heath

Exploring Solutions for Biophilic Design in Commercial Spaces



BIOPHILIC DESIGN AMBASSADORS ASSEMBLE IN BRIGHTON

The group featured biophilia advocates from the worlds of building and product design including (pictured front) Dawn Scott, Senior Colour Designer at sponsor Dulux Trade

In February, we staged a round table which was focused on the positive effects of workplace environments on users, and we couldn't have picked a better venue to demonstrate this in practice – the stunning Projects Nile House in Brighton. Sponsored by Dulux Trade, this event was a real-world discussion inspired by human-centred approaches to biophilic design, which demystified the approach somewhat as being more straightforward than it may seem, but also vividly showed why clients needed to be convinced to include it as a must-have for healthy future workplaces.

More and more office workers are doing long shifts where they are focused on a screen and dislocated from nature, but lockdowns re-taught us that we don't want to be removed from the health benefits of the natural world simply because we are at work. It is increasingly designers' job to show clients the compelling, evidence-based case for biophilic design, including potential returns on investment and physical as well as mental benefits for staff. From hormonal benefits of nature, light and colour, the group discussed

how spaces can be transformed to work better, but also why this needs to happen more in the mainstream.

It's a well-worn statistic that staff are 90% of a business' costs, and investing in biophilia is an upfront cost. But there are benefits in not only recruitment and retention, but also productivity. However, designers are confronted by often reticent clients, and if they do put their weight behind thorough-going biophilia, design measures can still be easy pickings for value engineering.

Greater openness to more natural office approaches has been seen in recent years, with higher-end companies and investors' ESG goals to fulfil, the attendant hormonal benefits to alleviate stress and increase productivity, and powerful drivers such as the WELL Standard. But as our event co-chair Oliver Heath stated, to fully realise the benefits of biophilic design, it needed to be seen as part of a 'human-centred' approach which improves quality of life, not confined to a sustainability agenda that could mean it's just about "doing less bad," said Heath (e.g. reducing toxins).



ROUND TABLE CO-CHAIRS

James Parker, Managing Editor, Architects' Datafile
Oliver Heath, Director, Oliver Heath Design

ATTENDEES

Jim Hart, Director, Corstorphine + Wright Architects
Stuart Fraser, Partner, MAKE Architects
Larry Tate, Projects & Communication Coordinator, Alliance for Sustainable Building Products
Kim Dixon, Designer, OP Group
Jenny Edwards, Creative Director, Oktra
Richard Sabin, Director, Growing Revolution
Sam Taylor, Owner, Bavian Design
Lisa Norton, Lead Designer, Biophilic Designer
Rokshid Ghaziani, Senior Lecturer in Architecture & Interiors, University of Portsmouth
Craig Jones, Founder, Jones + Partners

SPONSORS' ATTENDEE

Dawn Scott, Senior Colour Designer, Dulux Trade

As part of the research discussed by the group, our 2022 study among architects working found that for their workplace clients, employees' wellness was a more important factor than sustainability. The round table showed that now, the case could not be clearer for growing the use of biophilic design.

Oliver's ecosystem

Oliver Heath could be described as a biophilic design evangelist, famous for his television work showing the transformational effect of thorough biophilic approaches on users, such as on 'DIY SOS' and 'Changing Rooms.' He set the scene for the discussion, vividly showing just how powerful designs that tap into human beings' innate connection to nature can be in workplaces. Heath also chaired the first part of the discussion, bringing in learnings from other sectors and sharing recent research from commercial projects, such as a live retrofit where productivity had increased dramatically for a limited investment.

He explained the greater role biophilic design now plays in workplace design, after a pandemic in which many people rediscovered the healing qualities of nature. Even though it's now seen as key for many workplace briefs, he said it was also undervalued by numerous commercial sector clients, although post-Covid employers still need to encourage staff back to offices. Richard Sabin of Growing Revolution went as far as to say that business owners are "paranoid about getting people back into offices," but introducing the wide range of features that make up biophilic approaches is one way to truly make staff feel valued.

Heath said that pre-Covid, biophilic design was "a bit of an afterthought," and even now, it can be seen somewhat narrowly as "about putting plants in buildings," notwithstanding this still being "a really important part." He said that before the pandemic,

his firm were being asked to come in at RIBA stage 3 or 4, "where the conceptual thinking had already been done," and biophilia was essentially being seen as a decorative overlay.

However, with workers enduring lockdowns bereft of a diverse range of spaces, people "stopped and really appreciated the value of nature to our lives; its ability to alleviate some of the pressures," said Heath. As workplaces reopened, employers looking to retain staff were forced to take their re-born sensitivity to natural benefits on board, and maintain that connection, said Heath. Outcomes included "focusing on different zones and spatial typologies, and breaking those down to create spaces that support functionality, focus, relaxation, recuperation and a sense of community." This was driven by employers needing to "offer an awful lot to get them to commute; spaces giving them and their lives so much more."

The debate – lessons from experience

The first part of the debate saw Oliver Heath asking delegates to share their experiences of creating biophilic workplaces. He framed the discussion by cautioning against the 'tick box' approach to biophilia, resting on "bought in" elements such as plants and natural materials. Instead, Heath said tangible results come from designing an interwoven 'ecosystem' of different factors that can deepen users' connection to nature, bringing the maximum benefits.

Other designers around the table included Jenny Edwards from leading workplace specialist Oktra, who initially trained as an architect but switched to interior design due to her belief she could have a greater "human impact." We were also joined by Kim Dixon of fitout firm OP Group, biophilic design specialist Lisa Norton, and Brighton-based designers Craig Jones and Sam Taylor. And bringing her substantial experience from projects and knowledge on the underappreciated role of colour in nature-inspired workplaces, was Dawn Scott, Senior Colour Designer from round table sponsor, Dulux Trade.

We also had renowned living walls innovator Richard Sabin from Growing Revolution (and ex-founder of pioneering green walls firm Biotechture), and Senior Lecturer in Architecture and Interiors

**A ROUND ROOM FOR A ROUND TABLE**

The venue for the discussion – Projects Nile House in Brighton – embodied the ideals of a wellness-supporting workspace



at the University of Portsmouth, Rokshid Ghaziani, and Larry Tate, Projects and Communication Coordinator, at the Alliance for Sustainable Building Products.

Lastly, giving key insights from the construction specification end of growing biophilic design approaches in theory and practice, were Jim Hart of Corstorphine + Wright architects, and Stuart Fraser of MAKE Architects. Our attendees brought learnings and passion from and for other sectors than office workplaces, which could also be transferred into the human-centred imperatives needed to enliven offices. In particular, Lisa Norton gave a strong case for biophilia in schools, and Jim stressed the benefits of such human-centred connections to nature in healthcare environments, although he admitted there were major challenges in bringing planting into healthcare interiors, even in primary care settings.

Making a compelling case for workplace clients

Oliver Heath said that bringing biophilia into workplaces meant using a range of design measures to make “connections to nature,” from natural light and materials, to mimicking nature using more ‘artificial’ approaches, and the simple aim of changing scenery in an interior over the course of a day. He added that by “evoking a sense of life,” biophilic design can be the route to stimulating workplace interiors, not just “calming and restorative” ones, as required.

He gave a sense of the current state of design in workplaces, saying adoption of biophilia in the sector had become “more and more interesting over the past few years.” Heath said by “drawing in elements of hospitality, education and healthcare” interiors, a richer blend of different sector approaches was creating design interest for practitioners as well as clients. This aligned with moves, post-Covid, for what is considered a workplace to be seen in the broadest sense, so design typologies are blurring – for example, “new generations are seeing their workplaces as somewhere which furthers their learning and becomes an educational environment.”

Richard Sabin of Growing Revolution said that from his firm’s experience helping workplace clients embrace the challenge of comprehensively integrating biophilic approaches such as green walls, the “return on investment conversation is one that always comes around.” He said that while it is easy to “win clients over in the heart,” when their board starts requiring data on the value for money of such approaches and installations, “is when it really becomes interesting.” Despite the engagement with the concept, Sabin added that the aim of supporting datasets around the effect of plants in the workplace were “very undervalued.”

Oliver Heath cautioned that biophilic design’s multi-faceted nature meant that quantitative data might not be appropriate, so “qualitative data needed to become more compelling.” Lisa Norton said that the design sector was short of UK-focused quantitative data on the benefits of biophilic workplace design. “We can’t prove it particularly well, because we don’t have the statistics in the UK; we need to be pushing for post-occupancy research.” However, Jenny Edwards warned that where data on effectiveness exists, blue chip corporate clients were prone to “hold it to themselves.”

Natural materials may be the ideal scenario for biophilia, but they can provide challenges for consultants – Richard Sabin provided the somewhat counterintuitive feedback (from fire



LESSONS FROM OTHER SECTORS

Architect Jim Hart from Corstorphine & Wright brought relevant human-centred design insights for workplace clients from projects in the healthcare sector

consultants) that “nature is a non-conventional building material,” which according to them, therefore “can’t be quantified, or trusted.” He explained that because natural components such as green walls are highly context-dependent, “if you’re putting a green wall up for air pollution reduction, and you’ve got it on the wrong side of the street, it will do completely different things; so the problem there is getting transferable data on it.”

Biophilia plus flexibility

Biophilic design could be a lever for not only providing the flexible, adaptable workspaces which have become especially relevant to the new generation of post-Covid employees seeking a balance of home working and office collaboration. The changing elements of nature which can help bring wellness benefits can be used to help drive biophilic design components to help support both this flexibility and the outcomes being sought from human-centred design. At the same time, as Craig Jones pointed out, people can now be working “basically anywhere,” which presents its own challenge.

Jenny Edwards said that employers had to be aware that “Gen Z, in particular, react very strongly against being forced to come back in, they want to be encouraged.” Craig Jones said that clients had severely reduced their capacity after Covid, but ingenious design solutions were needed to now accommodate the increased numbers. Edwards agreed, citing her client Deloitte, but saying there was now a “massive focus on flexibility,” for example using the adaptability of circadian lighting for evening events, “making it work harder.”

Stuart Fraser of MAKE said that the client focus on attracting and retaining the ‘best’ employees using design in competitive markets had been embedded pre-Covid, but this had intensified to be a more fundamental need post-Covid to persuade them to commute. “Suddenly it’s about whether people want to come back, or not, and everyone realises that there are benefits in the campus lifestyle approach.”

Oliver Heath got the group to summarise their key innovations for the future of biophilic workplaces – Jenny Edwards said



“functional adaptability,” with flexibility at its heart, and Lisa Norton offered “natural patterns and analogues,” but also a greater focus on acoustics and even “sound healing.” Jim Hart proposed greater collaboration across the key professions involved would bear fruit, alongside greater awareness, and Larry Tate said that clients experiencing more biophilia in the flesh would force change, as would the ability, highlighted by Richard Sabin, for biophilia to “do multiple things.”

Solutions & Sponsor Questions

The second half of the debate heard in-depth discussion of solutions for biophilic design, and their effectiveness in use, for workplaces spanning offices and schools to healthcare and other commercial spaces. Sponsors Dulux Trade posed questions to the panel to discover views on how colour can contribute to biophilic designs.

We also heard key recommendations from all contributors for the industry and clients; these were revealing and diverse, including on what elements should be prioritised, going well beyond just plants.

The colour connection

To kick off the solutions section of the debate, Dawn Scott from Dulux Trade asked the group: “We often see biophilic design expressed through planting and timber – how are you using colour as part of that nature connection, particularly in spaces without direct access to outdoor landscapes?”

Kim Dixon said that her firm “likes to mimic the richness in nature, including bright colours and things like insects, flowers, in detail, but keeping the broad palette in mind in terms of what’s going on outside, culturally and the countryside.” Oliver Heath offered the approach used by his firm of “ecological balance theory,” which ties into choosing colours with positive associations for users, with blues, greens and yellows all having a place for different uses; even “shots of red and orange“ can be used sparingly for “energising spaces.” Like Dixon, he advocated drawing on the colours found in a local area but also trying to support individual spatial uses, while Scott suggested adhering to local colours could be challenging in some urban environments.

Her second question to the group was whether the palette used for biophilic design could be broadened beyond the commonly-chosen range of “greens and natural tones,” to “support both restoration and activation,” bearing in mind the range of possible users with different neurodiverse needs. Rokshid Ghaziani from Portsmouth University said that it was dangerous to make assumptions on what users wanted, colour-wise, considering neurodiversity – some may not prefer bright colours, or pupils with autism might require a different colour palette entirely.

Somewhat concerningly, Stuart Fraser of MAKE asserted that “he didn’t think architects were taught any of that at architecture school,” and Oliver Heath concurred that colour psychology was avoided by architectural schools, partly due to the need to consider different cultural contexts. Other delegates including Craig Jones and Jenny Edwards described how they employed colour to assist users for example in terms of wayfinding, especially where English may not be a first language, and to create an ‘organic’ sense of change to leaven the effect of large commercial buildings. She



VIEWS FROM ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

Industrial designer Craig Jones said clients had not only reduced their workspace post-Covid, but were embracing a host of new technology including biophilic simulations

cautioned that “difficulties can arise when clients have very strong colour palettes that they want to utilise.”

Lisa Norton said that hue was “extremely important” and that white walls “can stress your system, while warmer colours can create a ‘hug’.” However with different users often having a very different take, designers had to take a balanced view, but as Edwards stated, “you can’t design by committee.”

Richard Sabin cited a McArthur Glen shopping centre in Kent, whose green wall changes with the seasons, such as primroses emerging in spring, giving people a real sense of vitality and change, and the client’s data shows that footfall has increased on the side of the site featuring biophilic elements. Dawn Scott and Lisa Norton backed the seasonally changing approach, particularly in urban contexts which can be dislocated from seasonal change, Norton quoting the 15th ‘principle of Biophilic Design’ of “awe and wonder” of nature, as a maxim backing up this approach.

Productive results

Oliver Heath cited a retrofit project in central London his firm had worked on, having seen the potential catalysed by a pre-occupancy study that the client, Knight Frank Investment Management, was already planning for its own workplace refurbishment. The crucial constraint was budget – “very small,” says Heath, at around £1,000 per employee, in a modest space for around 40 people.

The fact that the in-house project manager had already done a pre-occupancy assessment was the spur that made Heath’s firm want to get involved: “they had asked staff a good set of questions, and this was quite a rare thing for a client to go, ‘Well, we’ve asked, we’ve opened that can of worms, now we’ve got to deliver on it.’” The designers embarked on a low-budget treatment, but one which would use the “full plethora of biophilic features, whether elements of nature, natural materials, colours, textures.”

Focused on “really careful thinking,” the paint colour used became “a really important feature, because we know that it can create a large transformation for relatively small cost,” said





THE SCIENCE OF BIOPHILIC DESIGN

Lisa Norton said that clients and designers needed to understand that biophilic design extends far beyond just plants to a scientific, holistic approach to environments

Heath. Even though the cost dictated that whole walls couldn't be repainted, a wide band of colour was chosen at eye level, plus highlights of colour in "slightly odd spaces, like on columns."

The final post-occupancy study gleaned some "amazing results," declared Oliver Heath. Individual productivity went up by nearly 18%, and perceived wellbeing increased by 28%, focus by nearly 12% – and sensory stimulation by 48%. "There were some really compelling numbers," he said, especially considering the cost of "one person not being in the office because they're burned out or because they're absent," thereby representing "significant" return on investment for the client.

Further solutions

The event's solutions discussion considered looking at broader ideas around the design elements that should be prioritised to connect workers back to nature – including sight, sound, touch, and even taste and smell, including consideration of neurodiverse users, and the solutions currently popular with commercial workplace clients.

The chair of the second portion of the debate, *Architects' Datafile* editor James Parker, cited the findings from ADF's Industry Viewfinder audience survey on biophilic design, published in January 2025, which found that clients' corporate ethos or ESG goals were not the major driver for engaging in biophilic design. Sitting above this was 'end user wellness,' aesthetics, and architects' own design imperatives, as well as the passive design benefits of biophilic approaches.

Potentially concerning for paint manufacturers, colour was eighth on the list of 11 priority areas in terms of biophilic design measures, presenting a major obstacle to overcome in projects. More positively, however, of the small number of respondents who measured the ROI of projects (10%), 40% said that clients were seeing a return of 30 to 40% from biophilic redesigns of commercial settings. Our delegates demonstrated exactly why such thoughtful approaches were becoming more popular, and why clients as well as designers should take biophilic design seriously.

ROUND TABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Jim Hart, Corstorphine + Wright Architects:** Start designing around biophilia, rather than biophilia being designed around the building. Make it an integral part of the concept at the outset, as opposed to shoehorning it in.
- **Kim Dixon, OP Group:** Having a lot of time with the end user makes it so much easier to do environmental design that is human centred.
- **Richard Sabin, Growing Revolution:** Language is important; don't talk about it as being a liability to be maintained, that gets handed over to the FM department, talk about it as an asset to be nurtured.
- **Rokshid Ghaziani, University of Portsmouth:** Consider the relaxation benefit of water for environments, and health benefit of biomaterials. Digital biophilia, potentially interactive surfaces and changing wall colours, and use of projectors; also, our connection to the sky isn't really considered.
- **Stuart Fraser, MAKE Architects:** Post-Covid, we now talk about people as well as the planet, and not being so blinkered on sustainability, and looking at wider values and opportunities. We need to strive harder on innovation and breaking the barriers down.
- **Dawn Scott, Dulux Trade:** Nature-inspired colour is not just blues and greens, it's all of the colours in nature. And saturation needs considering, not just light reflectance values for regulatory compliance; colour saturation ties into neurodiversity. Also, don't leave colour until the end, bring it further up the design process.
- **Larry Tate, Alliance for Sustainable Building Products:** Who are the actual decision makers on workplace projects, and how do we convince them? 'POV' is super important, how can we take them to buildings to find out how they make them feel?
- **Sam Taylor, Bavian Design:** Take your clients for a walk to a park to have a meeting.
- **Lisa Norton, Biophilic Designer:** Recognise there is a real education piece that biophilic isn't just plants or ticking a couple of boxes, it's a much more scientific approach.
- **Jenny Edwards, Oktra:** We need more widespread accreditation; because clients are so keen on having the 'piece of paper.' And maybe some kind of incentive for clients, like a tax relief for biophilia.

Oliver Heath summed up his strategy for designers looking to bring natural benefits to a wide variety of workspace projects in a robust way: "Ensure that every space is a healthy space by applying the concept of a 'Green Thread of Wellbeing.'" He concluded: "This ensures that wellbeing features are applied consistently throughout the design from outside to inside, and adopted by each respective profession." A laudable aim.




 Round table chair,
James Parker

Solutions for Low Energy Domestic Retrofit at Scale

A round table we staged in February, as the Government launched its £15bn Warm Homes Plan, brought architects, sustainability consultants, retrofit experts, industry bodies and suppliers together to confront the challenges – and propose solutions – for achieving home retrofit at an unprecedented scale. With £5bn of retrofit funding up for grabs, the event was a crucial opportunity to share practical insights and address obstacles, as occupier affordability and fuel poverty becomes a greater UK challenge by the day.

The discussion was sponsored by NIBE Energy Systems and IDSystems, who both posed practical retrofit-at-scale questions as well as solutions to the group. Questions included how low carbon heating solutions fitted into the context of holistic retrofits alongside fabric improvements, and the changes in window and glass design spec that would be needed. The group also reviewed recommendations made by our 2024 round table (our first looking in-depth at the retrofit challenge).

The delegates discussed whether the new Warm Homes Plan would fill a yawning gap left by the sudden cancellation of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) scheme in late 2025, and highlighted the potential shortcomings of the Plan, which the Government would do well to take account of. Delegates agreed there was a need to maintain a focus on fabric improvements alongside renewables, but some believed it was important to not “make the perfect the enemy of the good,” in pursuing retrofit at scale, given the urgent need to achieve huge numbers of completed schemes quickly.

A series of recommendations were made by the panel, for both industry and government, from intervening to close the ‘spark gap’ between electricity and gas prices, to introducing ‘building passports’ which would help a building’s resale value to be increased based on the transparency of its retrofit measures. And there was an overarching focus on the need to increase the credibility and quality of retrofits, in the wake of controversies around ECO projects, and thereby build trust among end users. This was an open and candid discussion about the fundamental



WARM SUPPORT FOR RETROFIT AT SCALE

Our expert group, including event sponsors NIBE, looked in-depth at the existing and needed ‘sticks’ and ‘carrots’ for pursuing low energy retrofits across the housing sector

shifts required in not only the construction industry but the wider property sector in order to deliver the regulatory ‘sticks’ as well as the incentive ‘carrots’ that are going to be needed to achieve good quality retrofits at an unprecedented scale. The round table concluded with recommendations for both Government and the industry, featured at the end of this report.

The debate: challenges

Anna Scothern of the National Home Improvement Council (NHIC), was unable to attend, but shared a comprehensive set of viewpoints around retrofit challenges to contribute to the session. She said the principal constraint on achieving domestic retrofit at scale “is not installer willingness or technological capability – it is structural instability in the policy and delivery environment.”

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CHAIR

James Parker, Managing Editor, Architects' Datafile and Housebuilder & Developer

ATTENDEES

- **Simon Kemp**, Growth & Innovation Director, Warmworks
- **Greg Mathers**, Co-Founder, Studio CMA
- **Brian Berry**, CEO, Federation of Master Builders
- **Naomi Sadler**, Director, SEES (Sadler Energy & Environmental Services)
- **Laura Morgan-Forster**, Innovation Lead, Innovate UK
- **Andrew Tod**, Head of Net Zero, Sureserve
- **Ben Whiterod**, Head of Decarbonisation, Social Infrastructure
- **Cypren Edmunds**, Project Coordinator, Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance
- **Trevor Wilkins**, Managing Director, PAH Building & Construction

SPONSORS' ATTENDEES

- **Rick Clarke**, Product Manager, NIBE Energy Systems

Scothern said that the market remains challenged by short funding cycles and “stop-start programmes,” but that responsibility for delivering most of the retrofits required would rest on SMEs. At the same time, they were facing “rapid regulatory shifts without transition periods, fragmented standards, and high administrative and compliance burdens, set against “thin margins and limited working capital.”

She said that major changes needed to deliver scale were: “multi-year funding certainty, predictable regulatory pathways, simplified compliance interfaces, and payment structures that do not penalise small firms.”

Sustainability consultant Naomi Sadler of SEES highlighted a range of retrofit issues, including the concern that in the private rented sector, tenants were not yet protected from the potential adverse consequences to their properties' interior from low energy upgrades, although Awaab's Law had been introduced to mandate tackling damp and mould in social housing. “There are all these condensation issues, where you're creating these thermal bridges, because you're not measuring where you're creating a problem.”

Current practice & driving consumer confidence

Several delegates raised the issue of a lack of consumer demand for low energy retrofit, citing a range of issues from finance to trust, and this needed addressing. Simon Kemp of Warmworks, which has a network of 42 retrofit contractors operating in Scotland and is expanding southwards, stressed that demand-led retrofit there, at least among social tenants for tackling fuel poverty, had been very strong versus more proactive retrofit. He said that there were interest-free and low cost loans (being administered by the Energy Saving Trust, which is part of Warmworks), enabling heat pump

installations or similar larger upgrades, but advocated that in England, something more “demand led,” outside the “able to pay” loans-based scenario was needed to drive demand at scale – “which is community driven, local authority led, proactive.”

Sadler drew attention to the new RDSAP software, and asserted there wasn't “much of a demand for fuel poverty-based retrofit until MEES (the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard) comes in.” Simon Kemp pushed back on this, saying 15% of people in England were living in fuel poor homes, but accepted that “if the measure was the same as it was in Scotland, it would be greater, because you've got this somewhat arbitrary SAP level attached to fuel poverty [under £36,000 household income for the Home Energy Grant eligibility].”

Sadler said “a lot of people are in the private rented sector, and until MEES is a mandatory requirement, they are waiting until they “suddenly need to deal with this; there's no driver, no push.” She suggested using “in-use readings” on performance; “it doesn't form part EPC, but it should.”

As a contractor, Trevor Wilkins expressed concern about the current lack of a “fabric first approach,” saying “I think homeowners could be very disappointed in the short term.” Consumer understanding of renewables was also an issue: “Unless you use batteries correctly, drawing input overnight, I think people will be inundated with rather large bills over and above what their gas bill was, and you'll instantly get that negative impact, and that will spread very quickly amongst the public.” He added: “I think people don't realise electricity is currently five times the cost of gas.”

He echoed Laura Morgan-Forster's comments from Innovate UK, saying consumer education was now imperative, and without this plus good quality installation, retrofit targets were “pie in the sky.” It “has to not be another Government scheme that falls off the tracks.”

Brian Berry of the Federation of Master Builders said that endless political shifts at the Ministry of Housing had caused sustained uncertainty, plus failed schemes like the Green Deal and Green Homes Grant. He said that FMB members' focus was that “we need to go back to basics,” and added that they “really wanted to see the results of the EPC consultations.” He supported the theory proposed of every home having an “energy passport” enabling homeowners to “understand the performance of their home and the [retrofit] measures that best suit the needs of that home.”

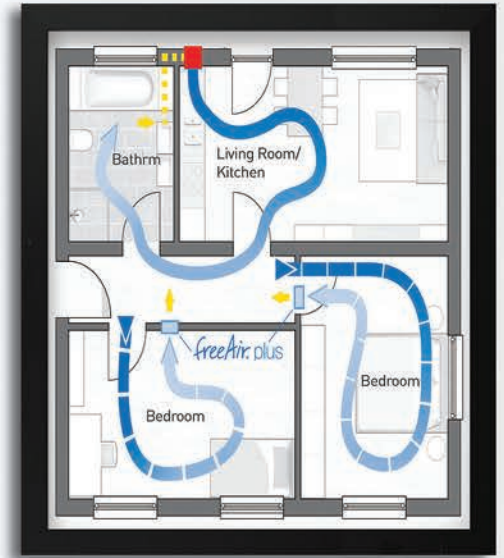
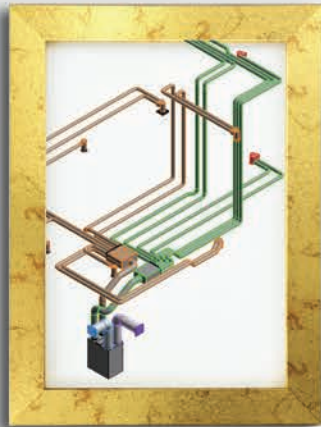
Naomi Sadler gave the forthright view that the Government “rushed out the Warm Homes Plan” when they cancelled ECO4, to avoid “mass unemployment; we've basically trained all these people that are going to leave the industry, and we're not going to have anyone to do the assessments.” She added: “I think it needs to be mandatory that every house assessed is by a competent person,” which thereby “creates a plan for that house of all the work that needs to be done, including condensation risks, and the ventilation assessment.”

Sadler said this needed to be done before a heat pump was considered, and while she endorsed the technology, they were being “oversized and undersized,” and criticised RDSAP for “not assessing the things it needs to assess,” again potentially resulting in tenants in the private rented sector being on the receiving end of




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TRADITIONAL VALUES

Cyren Edmunds of the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance (second from left, with Ben Whiterod of Social Infrastructure to his right, and Rick Clarke of NIBE and Brian Berry of the Federation of Master Builders to his left), puts the case for developing skills in retrofitting historic buildings

poorly-performing retrofits.

She also said the EPC consultation was a “massive missed opportunity” to drive retrofit in the private rented sector by making retrofit “automatically trigger a requirement for a new EPC, and instead allowing existing EPC C properties to essentially be immune from upgrades for 10 years.” She added: “There’s nothing to make the landlord improve that house, regardless of how poor the quality or the cost to the resident.” Simon Kemp said, candidly: “Get a friendly assessor, and they’ll get you a C.”

The delegates were keen to stress the importance of focusing on consumer preferences in retrofit decisions, including aesthetics as well as functionality. Sadler agreed that consumer education in understanding the benefits of retrofit measures was key. Anna Scothern warned that the consumer side was challenging as “demand remains inconsistent, due to confusion about schemes and eligibility, lack of trusted intermediaries, perceived disruption and complexity, and uncertainty about return on investment.” She said that in order to sustain demand at scale, messaging “must be simplified and consistent, and trusted sector bodies should be leveraged as confidence anchors.”

Laura Morgan-Forster said that it was problematic to expect simple answers regarding the impact of retrofit technologies in each setting, but data was increasingly being used to help inform consumers. She said she had recently been involved in the new CIBSE Technical Memorandum around heat pump performance, and it’s “actually incredibly complicated.” She added: “Getting one very precise figure is not easy, but it offers an opportunity to understand a building, but not necessarily what you’re going to do.” One number isn’t going to tell you how to improve your heat transfer coefficient, but it’s still part of a picture of creating more data and better understanding.”

Standards, quality & regulation

PAS2035, the new British Standard covering retrofit, including retrofit assessments air-tightness, and ventilation plus a new

Retrofit Coordinator role, has been a further missed opportunity, said delegates. Simon Kemp said it’s “kind of perverse that they didn’t mandate it, because the thing was designed to protect individual consumers, and the Government’s adopted it where you actually had pretty reasonable controls across many of the programmes already.”

Brian Berry complained that there was a “two tier” system where PAS2025 was mandated in social housing, but “didn’t exist in the owner occupier market.” Kemp countered that it “can be offered, but you have to pay for it; if you look at an organisation like Furbnow, it’ll cost them £6000 to go through the whole process. So if you can afford it, fill your boots. But for a lot of people who are perhaps above that fuel poverty threshold – the squeezed middle – they’re not going to pay for that.”

Rick Clarke of NIBE supported the idea of a ‘passport,’ but asked who would pay for this in the social housing sector. Naomi Sadler said “it should be part of the assessment,” and outlined the structure of governance in the design team to oversee this. “You’ve got retrofit coordinators, retrofit designers, and then you’ve got retrofit assessors, and the designers and coordinator can technically be the same person.” She continued: “These houses should then come with a home information pack, and if we’re talking scale, it needs to be obviously put in as a function of selling a house.”

Anna Scothern of NHIC commented that this could be another challenge for SMEs: “As well as overlapping accreditation requirements, the cost of compliance could be prohibitive for SMEs, and first-time entrants into retrofit frameworks have insufficient support, clear routes to competence, or practical guidance.”

Skills & funding

SMEs lacked confidence to employ and invest in key retrofit skills, due to an uncertain pipeline of work currently, according to Anna Scothern. However, she said retrofit competence “cannot be treated as a separate industry. It must integrate into mainstream RMI

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COLLECTIVE APPROACH

Simon Kemp of Warmworks explained how the JV (between the Energy Saving Trust, Changeworks and Sureserve) was maximising the opportunities to upgrade at scale

delivery.” In Scotland, retrofit skill levels in local authorities were variable, said Simon Kemp of Warmworks, but that was where his firm comes in to plug the gap at to fulfil the demand.

Cypren Edmonds of the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance said skills development “needed to be focused on older, traditional buildings, reflecting the reality of UK housing stock.”

Current funding models for retrofit were “often distorting the market rather than strengthening it,” according to Anna Scothern. In addition, over-centralised procurement models were excluding SMEs, and came with “administrative friction” that added cost. She continued on finance challenges: “Opaque eligibility criteria for homeowners, and audit regimes create retrospective financial risk. Long-term confidence requires funding mechanisms that reward sustained quality and relationship-based delivery.”

Solutions & sponsor questions

Heat pumps

Heat pump specialist manufacturer NIBE’s attendee, product manager Rick Clarke, prompted some in-depth and frank discussions about the practical application of heat pumps in different retrofit contexts with his question to the group. He asked where the pinch-points currently were across policy, design, installation and homeowner engagement that were holding back a widespread rollout of heat pumps in UK retrofits, i.e. “where the heat pump rollout breaks down.”

Andrew Tod of Sureserve said this disconnect was occurring around “communicating to the homeowner about the costs and the benefits, the disruption, what’s really needed to make it successful in a retrofit context.” There were challenges around consumer awareness of heat pumps in use, and the need for better awareness campaigns were confronted.

Tod added that while there’s been “huge ambition and drive by Government, there’s a huge gap [between that and installations]”. He said the recent “warm and fuzzy” public awareness campaign “fell a bit flat, and outside of LinkedIn I didn’t see it anywhere.” He

said that due to a lack of a concerted information campaign, “what you hear about heat pumps is negative, from the press, probably because it’s been delivered to homes that aren’t suitable, or to homeowners that don’t understand them.”

Cypren Edmonds said that in retrofit projects, it “most commonly breaks down at the assessment and design stage; if heat loss isn’t properly understood, and if the systems are wrongly sized, and expectations are mismanaged.” He added: “Homeowners don’t know how to ask the questions.” Ben Whiterod from Social Infrastructure said “a lot of it comes down to the enabling work required for it to be an efficient install,” for example “they might need to upgrade the fabric which isn’t in their budget.” Noise, space and aesthetics improvements were also discussed, and Whiterod admitted: “Quieter models are starting to come, but at a cost.”

Simon Kemp said that “there was a sense of fear around the cost [of heat pump installs], which is quite reasonable.” He said that a 2020 Department of Business and Energy (BEIS) Warmworks project installed heat pumps for free across homes in South East Scotland. In Scotland, said Kemp, “we can still fit gas boilers, if it’s the most economically advantageous thing to do for the homeowner, while to get the funding in England, “it’s either a heat pump or storage heaters, you can’t have a gas boiler, so you’re having to do more creative around that heating system to make sure you get the additional efficiencies.”

He said that in the private sector, the £7,500 grant for owners might still mean they’d still have to pay the same amount on an installation in a larger house, “more than potentially replacing the gas boiler.” He added: “there’s no real stick to say they have to get to a decarbonised position.” Currently, it was “motivated by the able to pay part, people buying into the green issue.”

Sadler also offered the insight from her experience that “some manufacturers say they can’t size up a heat pump until they have received my SAP calculation.” She said that a scheme that SEES had surveyed and air-tested for EPC in 2012 (which only required a sample to be tested), around 150 units had to have all heat pumps removed because they were “substantially undersized, because the client didn’t pay attention to the fact there were lots of rooms over garages.”

Delegates added that the potential benefits of heat pumps for comfort and health, beyond just energy savings, were not being fully appreciated by customers or being used to sell the concept at scale. It was also important to harness performance data to help specifiers and customers make informed decisions.

Window views

Co-sponsor IDSystems posed the question “how much consideration is given to thermal efficiency when it comes to choice of glazing solutions for retrofit, and how much is the choice of systems decided by other factors, including cost, aesthetics and functionality?”

Simon Kemp offered the view that windows in large-scale retrofit “were viewed as a commodity in large part,” while Naomi Sadler said all developers she was working with “were going to triple glazing as a marketing thing; it’s the new double glazing, but replacing double with triple can create other problems.” She

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TRIPLE THREAT

Sustainability consultant Naomi Sadler of SEES stressed the challenges around moving to triple glazing, from the weight on frames to possible overheating

explained this further challenge for consumer acceptance towards the aim of using glazing to achieve higher thermal values, saying the g-values of triple glazing “aren’t understood.” Having a “much lower g value,” an inevitable consequence is “you’re not benefitting from the solar gains [to the same degree].”

She added that a further issue “which is not really considered,” is that a triple-glazed window weighs “substantially more,” so they “have to be adjusted every couple of years because of the weight on the frame.” And finally, she said that if windows’ opening areas are reduced, there is a clearly more risk of overheating.

Anna Scothern of the National Home Improvement Council said that the benefits of innovative approaches were not a given, and “should focus not only on technology but on system integration.” She said while digital tools could simplify compliance and data capture, “aggregation platforms” were needed that “enable SME participation without removing local identity.” Innovation needed to dovetail into existing ways of working, she said, and “must reduce friction, not introduce new complexity.”

Conclusion: Innovating the wider retrofit market

The delegates agreed that stability in the market was needed to see retrofit at scale getting fully underway, but part of this was, in the words of Anna Scothern, about “long-term policy clarity over short-term interventions.” Also, SMEs including housebuilders had to be supported in their transition away from new build to retrofit, but were currently excluded while still expected to comply, she said. The scale asked for will only be achieved “if ambition is matched by delivery realism; she added. The Government “needs to unlock and enable the capacity that already exists within the RMI and SME community, but this meant changing the market environment so SMEs can “invest with confidence.”

And pluralism in the market was needed, to move “from centralised control to distributed capability,” and the scale required would result “from policy aligning with how the RMI sector actually functions — relationship-led, SME-dominated, and risk-sensitive.” Most tellingly, retrofit “must be normalised as part of mainstream home improvement,” concluded Scothern.

ROUND TABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Simon Kemp, Warmworks:** When it comes to the fuel poverty agenda, there needs to be consideration paid to demand-led reactive retrofits.
- **Greg Mathers, Studio CMA:** It’s about balance; we need to recognise that nothing in a building happens in isolation. And we need the checks early on before we implement things, because it’s only going to work if we can build trust through successful delivery.
- **Andrew Tod, Sureserve:** There’s a danger we’re going to be moving too slowly, because we have been waiting for the Warm Homes Plan, now we just need to get on with it, otherwise all the issues about the cost of living are not going to be addressed soon enough.
- **Ben Whiterod, Social Infrastructure:** The sector needs consistency. Stop changing the goal posts and the way we work; we need to make our minds up, and roll our sleeves up.
- **Cypren Edmunds, Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance:** Support skills development focused on older traditional buildings. Much of UK housing stock requires risk aware treatment so policy must reflect that.
- **Rick Clarke, NIBE Energy Systems:** Government needs to reduce the cost of electricity, that’s the only way forward.
- **Brian Berry, Federation of Master Builders:** Every home needs to have an improved EPC, as the passport which is the starting point for everything.
- **Trevor Wilkins, PAH Building & Construction:** The cost of electricity is the biggest deal here, it’s an impact for everybody. None of us know what the roadmap looks like, and it worries the hell out of me that we are relying on the Government to get it right.
- **Naomi Sadler, SEES (Sadler Energy & Environmental Services):** Retrofit Assessment works for maybe one to three dwellings, but anything above that should come under BREEAM Refurbishment.
- **Laura Morgan-Forster, Innovate UK:** Retrofit is a massive opportunity for the UK economy, and investors know that decarbonisation of heat is a big opportunity for them. Consistency of outcomes is very important, and there needs to be a pipeline of work that exists because people want retrofit.

As Laura Morgan-Forster of the Government-affiliated Innovate UK said, and our round table showed, domestic retrofit and decarbonisation is a “massive opportunity.” But the discussion revealed there are a host of issues to fix, beyond giving the sector a solid pipeline of work, to achieving the consistency and quality that is needed to help homeowners and tenants buy in.

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Image courtesy of Amtico

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Safeguarding school doors

Kate Jones of Ahmarra outlines the key pointers for safe specification of fire doors for education settings – balancing life safety, compliance and performance with the practical demands of busy learning environments.

Specifying fire doors can be one of the more complex elements of a construction project. As a life safety measure, fire doors must meet stringent legal and performance standards to ensure the protection of building occupants and property. In education environments, where buildings are occupied by children and young people, the role of fire doors becomes even more significant.

By helping to contain fire and smoke, fire doors provide vital time for staff to manage safe and orderly evacuation. However, fire performance is only one aspect of the specification. In schools, colleges and universities, fire doorsets are required to meet a wider set of demands. These can include acoustic control for effective learning environments, enhanced durability to withstand high traffic, hygienic finishes to support infection control, carefully selected ironmongery, and compliance with accessibility requirements.

This article explores the key considerations when specifying fire doors for education settings – helping navigate regulatory requirements, performance needs and practical design factors to ensure safe, compliant and effective solutions.

Third-party certification

UK fire door manufacturers are legally required to demonstrate that their products can resist the passage and spread of fire to a defined performance standard. Specifying third-party certified fire doors is widely regarded as the most reliable way to ensure compliance with the fire safety standards outlined in Approved Document B of the Building Regulations.

Fire doorsets that have been independently tested by a UKAS-accredited testing facility and certified under a recognised third-party scheme offer an additional level of assurance beyond minimum legal requirements. Continuous auditing ensures that the products which



are finally selected will remain consistent with the original tested specification, providing confidence that they will perform as intended in the event of a fire.

One example is the BM TRADA Q-Mark Timber Fire Door Manufacture scheme, a third-party product certification programme for construction products. Operated by BM TRADA, an independent certification body, it is widely regarded as one of the most rigorous fire door certification processes in the UK. The most effective way to ensure that fire doors meet the necessary safety standards is to specify independent third-party certification for both the manufacturer and the installer.

Acoustic performance

Doors play a critical role in limiting the transfer of noise between classrooms, helping to create an environment conducive to concentration and effective learning. Acoustic performance is achieved through a combination of engineered door cores and

Fire doorsets which are independently tested by a UKAS-accredited facility and certified under a recognised third-party scheme offer an additional level of assurance



Providing inclusive access is a fundamental requirement in the design of public buildings



carefully specified perimeter seals, designed to minimise sound transmission. When correctly specified and installed, these components help maintain appropriate acoustic separation between teaching spaces, which is critical for supporting student engagement.

Enhanced durability & longevity

Educational environments place significant demands on building components, with doors in particular subject to frequent use and impact. To withstand these conditions, doorsets can be faced with high-pressure laminate (HPL), a robust surface material that provides excellent resistance to scratches, stains and impacts. Combined with protection plates, these severe-duty doorsets are suited to high-traffic school environments. Solid timber lippings applied to all four edges further enhance durability by protecting the door core from damage, and extending the product's lifespan.

Infection control

Maintaining hygienic environments is an important consideration within schools. Doors can be specified with high-pressure laminate surfaces that incorporate anti-bacterial compound. Unlike surface-applied coatings, the anti-microbial compound is integrated throughout the material during manufacture, providing continuous protection. Capable of eliminating up to 99.9% of bacteria within 24 hours, this

helps to minimise the spread of infection, safeguarding staff and students.

Benefits of pre-hung doorsets

Doorsets can be supplied as complete pre-hung units, with door leaves factory-hung within their frames and all essential hardware components – including ironmongery, glazing systems, intumescent seals and drop-down acoustic seals – pre-fitted as standard. Factory controlled tolerances and preset clearance gaps significantly reduce the need for on-site adjustment, helping to streamline installation.

Accessibility

Providing inclusive access is a fundamental requirement in the design of public buildings, and nowhere is this more important than in educational establishments. The British Standard Code of Practice BS 8300-2:2018 states that surfaces within buildings provide a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) contrast of at least 30 points to assist people with visual impairments in identifying key elements such as doors. This contrast can be achieved through the specification of coloured laminates, painted finishes or natural wood veneers, allowing doors, frames and ironmongery to stand out clearly from surrounding surfaces.

Finger protection

Finger entrapment is a common injury risk where young children are present, such as in nurseries and primary schools. To mitigate this risk, fire doors can be specified with either retrofitted or integral finger protection systems. Retrofit finger guards prevent fingers entering the gap between the door leaf and frame at the hinge edge. Alternatively, integral solutions form part of the doorset's design.

Wayfinding

In larger educational environments, such as university campuses, navigation can often be challenging for students and visitors. Doors can contribute to intuitive wayfinding strategies through the use of colour-coded laminates, helping to visually differentiate departments, floors or circulation zones and supporting clearer spatial orientation throughout the building.

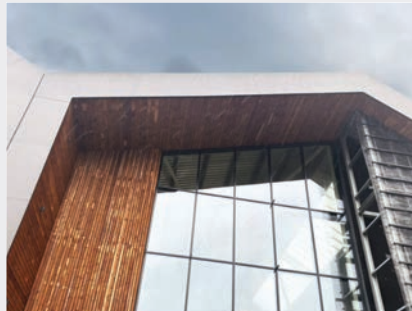
Kate Jones is marketing manager at Ahmarra

EJOT CROSSFIX provides ready-made overhanging soffit fixing solution

The EJOT CROSSFIX facade support system has enabled Kovara Projects to securely and efficiently install a complex timber cladding feature for a large new building created at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus near Didcot.

The system, which will be showcased at the Zak World of Facades event in Manchester in June, has been used in the construction of Tech Edge West. Delivered by main contractor Glencar, this will provide 70,000 ft² of mixed use office space, supporting a growing community of scientists, engineers and innovators.

The building's eye-catching design features a sawtooth roof with dark standing seam roofs and outer walls combining with naturally finished timber cladding to complement the natural setting. Each unit features a recessed facade at the gable ends formed through incorporating cantilevered purlins. This design required a continuation of the exterior wall's Thermopine timber



Once the timber cladding was installed, a seamless aesthetic was achieved with the continuation from the walls onto the soffits

cladding on the soffit of the roof overhang. Here, EJOT CROSSFIX provided a 'plug-and-play' solution for this distinctive architectural feature covering 24 m² across the eaves of the recessed facades.

CROSSFIX is an advanced, stainless steel substructure system designed for mounting

rainscreen facades and bespoke cladding, offering sustainability and thermal efficiency advantages over aluminium alternatives. It is supplied with a complete support package by EJOT UK to ensure a specification including the full engineering calculations is provided quickly to avoid project delays.

Scott Norris, Kovara Projects' design director, said: "By utilising the CROSSFIX system in conjunction with EJOT's technical support, the system's enhanced structural and spanning capabilities were identified and incorporated into the design, enabling a reduction in the quantity of material required for the soffit installation when compared with a traditional bespoke fabricated support framework. This was achieved while maintaining a fully engineered, structurally robust solution and reducing the practical and ergonomic challenges associated with overhead installation works."

01977 687040 www.ejot.co.uk/CROSSFIX

Edinburgh high school looks forward to Passivhaus certification with help of Wraptite®

As of May 2025, construction of the new £65 million Currie Community High School in Edinburgh is nearly complete, meaning it can be assessed for Passivhaus certification. A host of schools currently being built across Scotland are aiming to achieve the standard, many funded in part through the Learning Estates Investment Programme (LEIP).

"A key element of the Passivhaus standard is airtightness," said Cameron Galloway, site manager at Kier Construction. "The Proctor Group's Wraptite® membranes were therefore key products for us."

A preliminary air test carried out in early 2025 achieved a result of 0.44 air changes per hour (ach) – standing the school in good stead to surpass the Passivhaus requirement of 0.6 ach.

Currie Community High School has been designed to provide 1,000 student places across three floors, with a focus on daylight, indoor air quality and healthy, natural



materials, plus spaces for outdoor learning. The community aspect of the project features amenities including a library, sensory garden, and public allotments. As well as the comfort benefits that come from attaining Passivhaus accreditation, the building's low energy performance is designed to contribute to the City of Edinburgh Council's net zero goals.

Sport and leisure facilities on the site include a swimming pool, meaning the school will have one of the few Passivhaus certified pools in the UK.

While most of the high school is of steel frame construction, the pool hall uses a cross laminated timber (CLT) structure.

"We wanted to protect the timber kit as soon as possible," said Cameron, "so for that part of the building we used Wraptite UV. It offered us a longer exposure time than the standard Wraptite, meaning we could complete that part of the building early on."

Wraptite UV is typically offered for use behind open-jointed cladding, but in this instance supported the specific goals of the project following advice from the Proctor Group technical team.

Wraptite membrane was then used across the rest of the site. Both Wraptite products offer a combination of airtightness and vapour permeability, helping to meet low energy goals without increasing condensation risk in the structure. The self-adhered nature of the two membranes creates a consistent airtight seal without the need for a primer, saving on labour and material costs.

01250 872 261
proctorgroup.com/products/wraptite

Lyford Clay International School invests in a New Standard For Dance Education



Lyford Cay International School

Lyford Cay International School (LCIS), one of the leading international schools in The Bahamas, has strengthened its commitment to performing arts education with the opening of a new performing arts centre featuring a dance studio equipped with Harlequin Flexity sprung performance floor topped with a Harlequin Cascade performance surface and Harlequin ballet barres. The installation provides students with a professional environment designed to support safe training, creativity and performance.

Founded in 1962, LCIS is the only school in The Bahamas to offer the International Baccalaureate programme from the earliest years through to Grade 12. Known for its strong academic standards and high-quality facilities, the school continues to invest in spaces that support student development across both academic and creative disciplines.

Courtney Celeste Fox, dance department chair and director at LCIS, helped grow dance into a popular and valued part of the curriculum after launching an after-school programme that quickly expanded. As student interest increased, so did the need for a purpose-built space that matched the ambition of the school's young performers.

Lyford Cay International School
Bahamas, Blair J Meadows

Speaking about the new studio, Courtney said: "For as long as I've known about dance floors, I've known that Harlequin was the gold standard. The quality, the craftsmanship, and the longevity of their floors are unmatched. When it was time to design our new studio, I knew I wanted to invest in something that would last, a space that would set the tone for excellence and truly support the dancers who fill it."

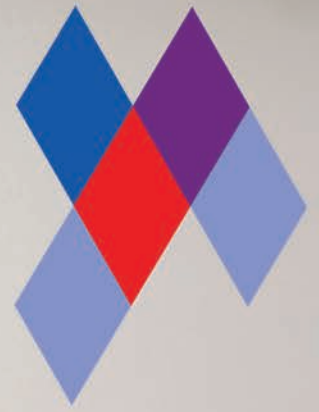
Specifying the correct floors for dance education is vital, helping students train with confidence without risk of slips and falls or longer-term stress injuries. It instills confidence in dancers to give full expression to their creativity, safe in the knowledge the dance floor will offer a consistent response.

For schools, colleges and universities looking to enhance their performing arts provision, investing in the right studio environment can make a lasting difference to both student wellbeing and programme quality.

To find out more about specifying dance floors for education spaces, contact the Harlequin team today.

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Blair J. Meadows and Lyford Coy International School

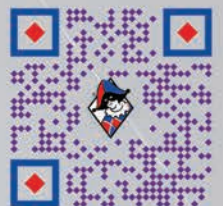
Harlequin provides a turnkey solution for all performance spaces, from initial design to expert installation, offering advice and guidance every step of the way. With an extensive range of sprung floors, vinyl floors, dance mirrors, ballet barres and dance studio equipment, Harlequin can provide everything a good performance space requires.

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A strong footing for learning

Flooring in education must balance safety, durability and acoustics over time. Melissa Heath from leading manufacturer Amtico explores why long-term performance needs to be more effectively considered during specification.

Ultimately, flooring plays a fundamental role in how educational spaces perform over time

Education environments are among the most demanding interior settings. From primary schools to universities, flooring is subject to constant footfall, movement of furniture and chairs, spills, cleaning regimes, as well as the day-to-day unpredictability of how spaces are used. At the same time, it must contribute to a safe, comfortable and functional environment for both students and staff. As a result, flooring specification is rarely driven by a single requirement, but by the need to balance multiple, often competing, priorities.

At the specification stage, decisions are typically made against a defined set of project criteria, including aesthetics, durability and compliance. However, the

way a floor performs over time is shaped by how it is used in practice, rather than how it performs on day one. In busy learning environments, where corridors, classrooms and communal areas experience sustained and varied use, this distinction becomes particularly important. Flooring is not a static element – it is a surface that must continue to perform consistently over years of daily activity.

Slip resistance is one area where this distinction is especially important. Flooring must support safe movement across a range of conditions, particularly where footfall is constant and varied – from corridors exposed to moisture ‘tracked in’ from outside, to the impact of hundreds of people moving through cafeterias or lunch halls, along with debris from food and drink.

Commonly referenced slip tests, such as ‘wet pendulum test’ values, provide a useful benchmark at the point of manufacture or installation, but they do not necessarily reflect how a slip-resistant surface will perform once it has been subjected to ongoing wear and cleaning. (For example, a floor may achieve a pendulum test value of 36+ in controlled conditions, but this alone does not equate to safety flooring or compliance with the enhanced slip resistance standard – BS EN 13845, which is designed to ensure performance is maintained over time.)

Understanding this difference is key to supporting safety in the long term. While widely available slip-resistant LVT has its place, it is important to consider how slip resistance is maintained over the lifetime of the floor, particularly in high-traffic areas such as schools where performance consistency and longevity are critical.

Alongside safety, acoustics also play a significant role in shaping effective learning environments for students of all ages. Noise levels have a direct impact on concentration, communication and overall comfort, particularly for neurodiverse individuals.



In multi-storey school buildings, this can be especially noticeable during transition periods between classes, such as where movement in corridors and classrooms above can disrupt quieter activities below, such as study sessions or exams.

While walls and ceilings are often the primary focus for acoustic design, flooring can also contribute to managing impact sound and reducing noise transfer between levels. Flooring solutions that offer impact sound reduction, often measured in decibels (dB), can support this by softening footfall noise and improving overall acoustic comfort, helping to limit the transfer of sound between classrooms, corridors and shared spaces.

There is rarely a one-size-fits-all approach to flooring in education. Together, these factors highlight the complexity of specification. Safety, acoustics, durability and design are often addressed as separate requirements, but in practice they must work in balance. This can present challenges where different performance needs are met through multiple product types or systems, increasing complexity in both specification and installation.

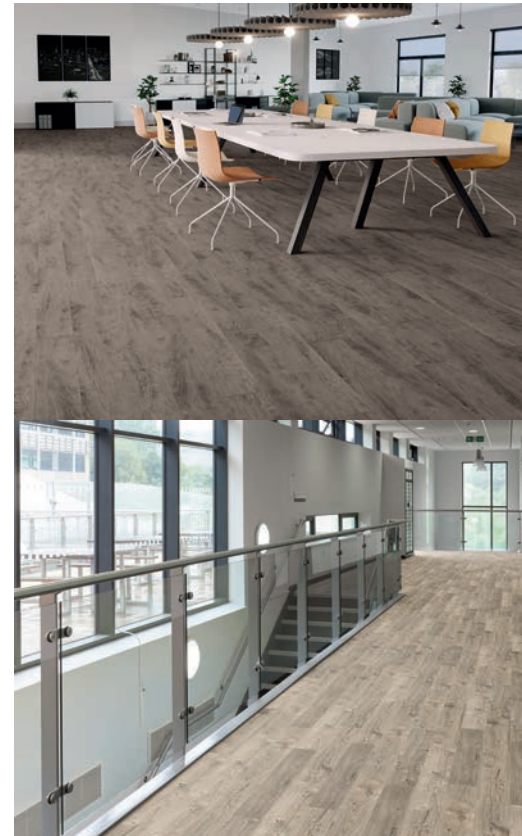
Materials such as LVT offer one

approach to addressing this balance. With the ability to combine durability, acoustic performance and design flexibility within a single flooring collection (such as Amtico Signature or Amtico Spacia), LVT can support a more streamlined specification process while responding to the varied demands of education environments. Its versatility also allows for consistency across different areas of a building, without compromising on performance requirements.

Ultimately, flooring plays a fundamental role in how educational spaces perform over time. Beyond initial appearance or compliance, it supports the everyday movement, safety and comfort of the people using those environments, from students navigating busy corridors to teachers taking a moment of calm between lessons.

By considering how materials will behave in real-world conditions, and over the full lifecycle of a building, architects can help ensure that flooring continues to meet the needs of both students and staff, long after installation.

Melissa Heath is regional commercial team leader at Amtico



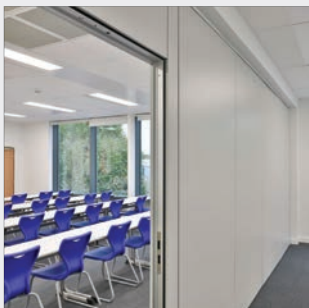
Safeguarding starts at the door: Compliant locking for nursery environments



In nursery and early years settings, door hardware plays a critical role in safeguarding. Beyond basic security, doors must prevent children from leaving unnoticed, restrict unauthorised access from outside and maintain fully compliant emergency escape at all times. FUHR's autosafe 833 and 835 KiGa multipoint locking systems have been developed specifically for these sensitive environments, providing a certified, application-led solution that removes the need for adapted or improvised hardware. The multipoint locking system incorporates two interconnected lock cases linked via a drive rod, enabling independent operation of two lever handles positioned at different heights. The lower handle, set at 850 mm, is accessible to children, while the upper lever at 1,570 mm allows staff to retain controlled access at all times. In an emergency, the secured lower lever – or integrated GfS e-Bar® – can be activated, triggering an alarm and alerting supervisory personnel immediately. This configuration ensures compliant escape while supporting safeguarding protocols during day-to-day operation.

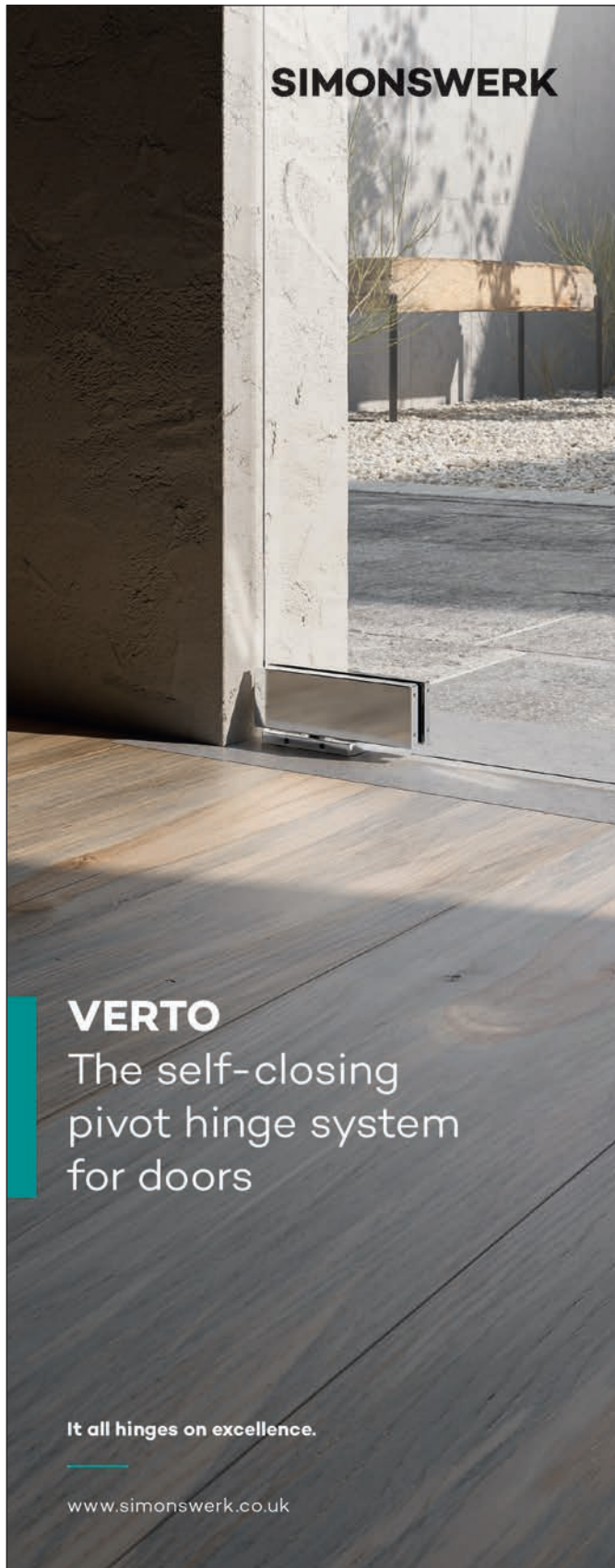
pbalf@fuhr.co.uk www.fuhr.de/en/solutions/areas-of-application/kindergarten-doors

Integrated movable walls create flexible learning spaces at London Academy



As part of a significant refurbishment project, **Style Group** collaborated with 3BM and ACS Construction to create flexible learning spaces at Kensington Aldridge Academy, London. A market leader in movable wall systems, Style installed two Dorma Variflex 100 manual partitions enabling large teaching areas to be quickly reconfigured into smaller, fully functional classrooms. Finished in a durable laminate melamine panel, the movable walls provide a robust, low-maintenance surface – ideal for high-traffic education settings. The system not only improves space functionality but also complements the academy's modern interior design scheme. The completed installation provides Kensington Aldridge Academy with a versatile, future-ready learning environment. The Dorma Variflex 100 system features a concealed powder coated aluminium track, ensuring a streamlined and unobtrusive appearance. This project demonstrates how expertly specified movable wall systems can transform education environments, delivering adaptability, sound control and design excellence without compromise.

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VISIT AT CLERKENWELL DESIGN WEEK

Altro delivers for emergency care facility

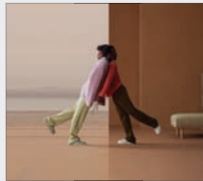


A stylish, safe and durable package of Altro products is delivering results at the newly developed Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) and Minor Injuries services at Bassetlaw Hospital. The project includes three popular Altro safety floors: Altro

Illustra, Altro Wood and specialist Altro Pisces. Hayley Hunter, interior designer at P+HS Architects, selected the Altro package. "Altro has such a great reputation for its safety aspects and durability, and the fact that it works just as well aesthetically alongside the other qualities is why we like to specify it," she said.

enquiries@altro.com altro.com/uk/sectors/health-and-care/hospitals

Forbo to champion low carbon design

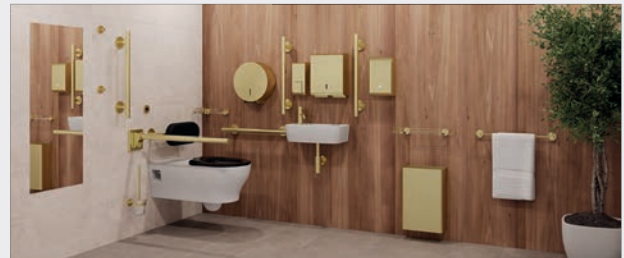


Forbo Flooring Systems will be welcoming visitors back into its EC1 showroom, located on St John Street, for the annual Clerkenwell Design Week. Forbo's focus is on sustainability and how beautifully co-ordinated colour palettes, textures and finishes can be seamlessly brought together, enabling effortless, responsible and very

low carbon designs. Visitors to the Forbo showroom can expect to learn more about its wide variety of low-carbon floor coverings, including the climate positive (carbon negative) Marmoleum range.

01773 744 121 www.forbo-flooring.co.uk/CDW

VISIT AT CLERKENWELL DESIGN WEEK



Fitzroy of London at Clerkenwell Design Week

Fitzroy of London will present its latest accessible washroom solutions at Clerkenwell Design Week (19-21 May 2026), introducing the new Oxford Doc M Commercial Pack and previewing a forthcoming digital configurator. The Oxford pack is designed to meet UK Building Regulations Doc M requirements through a set of preconfigured, compliant components that simplify specification and installation while reducing the risk of errors. Engineered for high-use commercial, hospitality and public settings, the pack prioritises durability, hygiene and user confidence. Robust materials, reinforced mounting points and non-porous surfaces ensure long-term performance. All elements – from grab rails to dispensers – are positioned within compliant reach zones and designed with ergonomics and accessibility in mind. Fitzroy will preview its new online configurator, due in June 2026. The tool enables users to quickly create compliant, project-ready washroom designs, generate technical outputs and visualisations, and streamline collaboration across design and delivery teams.

020 3773 1050 www.fitzroyoflondon.com

VISIT AT CLERKENWELL DESIGN WEEK

Sustainability & Sound

As Clerkenwell Design Week (w) marks its 15th anniversary across London's EC1 district, the festival is sharpening its focus on two salient themes: sustainability and sound. Across the venues, streets and green spaces, Design Interventions – the festival's curated series of large scale installations, will challenge designers and visitors alike to reconsider how we build, consume, celebrate and experience the spaces that surround us.

Championing circularity

From recycled structures to circular product design, CDW 2026 puts environmental responsibility at the heart of its programming. One of the most striking Design Interventions, The Canary Clock Tower by George King Architects, is a tall sculptural landmark inspired by Clerkenwell's historic tradition of clockmaking, displaying real time pollution data through analogue dials made from recycled plastic offcuts supplied by Smile Materials. The lightweight frame of reclaimed scaffolding sits behind a fully recyclable outer skin. George King Architects will explore relocating the piece to a permanent public setting so its message can endure, with all plastic components returned to Smile Materials to be recycled.

French designer Alexane Quenderff continues the theme of circularity with five benches made entirely from waste materials considered 'too difficult' to recycle. Each is fitted with a QR code linking to an interactive quiz that challenges visitors to identify the waste materials used.

Showrooms across Clerkenwell reflect this with new launches throughout the festival. Australian/Indonesian furniture brand Reddie launches its first European showroom, unveiling made-to-order chairs, desks, shelving and sofas crafted from reclaimed Indonesian teak salvaged from old railways and houses.

Swedish flooring brand Bolon introduces a take-back initiative that makes its flooring

and rugs fully circular; products installed without permanent adhesive can be returned to Bolon's recycling plant, where materials are transformed into new floors and rugs.

At Commercial Interiors on the Green, Edmund Bell presents a recycled blackout fabric designed for hospitality, workplace and public sector interiors. It proves that sustainability and specification performance are no longer in conflict.

Designing through listening

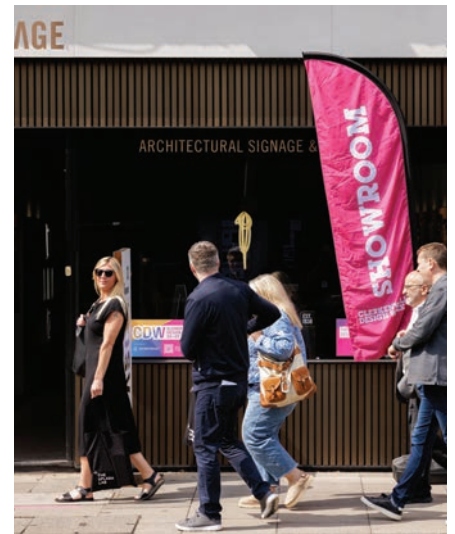
The theme of sound is explored from 'community installations' to acoustic workplace solutions. Design Intervention Recreatura is an immersive, sound-led installation that invites visitors to reimagine architecture through listening. A binaural experience explores two historic sites in Clerkenwell through the voices, memories and soundscapes of local residents. Visitors can respond by drawing on ceramic tiles – important in Clerkenwell's architectural heritage – and placing them in an installation in Charterhouse Square. They will gradually form a composite structure, transforming shared sounds and memories into an evolving architectural artwork.

At Commercial Design In the Park, German-Polish acoustic booth manufacturer BOX17 makes its debut with its award-winning Cube 1 Stand. Conceived to bring biophilic warmth to the modern workplace, it's lined with premium wool felt for a calming and tactile environment.

Lastly, the BAUX Floating Pavilion will demonstrate how acoustic design can shape both architecture and how we experience spaces by showcasing the Swedish brand's new X-FELT Floating collection.

Showrooms and exhibitors across EC1 will be launching new lighting, furniture, fabrics and more throughout the three days of the festival, proving its status as one of the world's premier platforms for design.

Article supplied by CDW



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Amtico explores calm and connection with 'The Amtico Retreat' at Clerkenwell Design Week

Amtico returns to Clerkenwell Design Week in 2026 with The Amtico Retreat, marking its first appearance at the festival in seven years. Taking over Paxton Locher House, the British flooring designer and manufacturer presents a space designed to offer a more considered pace within one of the industry's most high-energy design events.

Clerkenwell Design Week is known for its energy, with installations, talks and experiences unfolding across the district. Rather than stepping away from that intensity, Amtico reinterprets it – creating an environment that balances activity with moments of pause, allowing visitors to slow down, reset and engage more meaningfully, in a way that suits them.

The concept is underpinned by Amtico's guiding theme for Clerkenwell Design Week – where beautiful spaces grow through collaboration, creativity and choice – brought to life through a series of interconnected



spaces and experiences. It centres on creating a calm, open and welcoming environment that works for a wide range of needs, recognising that not everyone engages with or experiences spaces in the same way. From the moment of arrival, the layout of Paxton Locher House guides visitors through a more intuitive journey, encouraging them to stop, interact and spend time within the space rather than moving quickly through it.

Inside, the experience unfolds through a series of interconnected spaces that bring together Amtico's core themes of collaboration, creativity and choice. The Amtico in-house design team will create sector-focused displays styled to reflect real commercial environments across workplace, retail and hospitality. These life-sized, moodboard-style compositions combine flooring with furniture, lighting and material palettes, demonstrating how pattern, colour and texture come together within a scheme.

A more hands-on approach will run throughout the three days, inviting visitors to engage directly with materials. A collaborative luxury vinyl tile (LVT) display will evolve over the course of the event, allowing visitors to reposition individual LVT elements and explore how subtle changes in colour, wood or stone can transform the overall feel of a design in real time.

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VISIT AT CLERKENWELL DESIGN WEEK

Pyroguard invests in India with new manufacturing partnership to support growing demand



Pyroguard has established a new manufacturing partnership with South Glass in India as part of its strategic expansion to support increasing demand across India and the Middle East. This investment reinforces Pyroguard's long-term commitment to the Indian market and strengthens its operational presence in the region. The collaboration will enable shorter lead times and enhanced local technical and sales support, while ensuring full compliance with Indian building and fire safety standards alongside Pyroguard's globally recognised performance benchmarks. With a dedicated manufacturing base in India, Pyroguard will be better positioned to collaborate closely with architects, developers and installers to deliver customised fire-rated glazing solutions for applications including doors, partitions, facades and curtain walling. Pyroguard has supplied high-performance fire-resistant glazing to India for over a decade from its facilities in France and the UK, supporting major projects including Vivanta by Taj Dwarka, the Windsor Group IT Park in Noida and high rise developments in Hyderabad.

info@pyroguard.eu www.pyroguard.eu

Exciting times ahead for the Proctor Group



The Proctor Group is delighted to announce that a new commercial director will be joining the company, marking another important step in the company's continued growth across the construction and building materials sectors. Barbara Massie brings a wealth of experience, a strong commercial skillset, and a proven track record of driving growth. She will work closely with the Board to deliver sustainable commercial growth, strengthen customer and supply chain relationships, and support the ongoing development of the Proctor Group's people, products, and market presence. Barbara joins from Kirkwood Timber Frame, where she held the position of business development director for over two years. Prior to this, she held senior Director-level roles with Travis Perkins and NorDan, giving her an exceptional breadth of industry knowledge and an impressive range of transferable skills, having developed significant expertise in merchandising, manufacturing, and the wider construction supply chain. Her appointment reflects the Proctor Group's commitment to investing in experienced leadership to support customers, partners, and projects across the K construction industry.

01250 872261 www.proctorgroup.com

Expanded AIM technical team supports customers in face of increased regulatory pressures

As the construction industry adjusts to tougher technical demands following Grenfell, AIM Acoustic & Insulation Manufacturing is expanding its technical function to offer even greater customer support and meet growing demand for its fire, thermal and acoustic barriers.

AIM's technical support manager Kevin Blake is joined by Tashan Johnson as technical support executive to form an experienced team dedicated to advising customers on compliance, specification and correct installation. They will provide a market leading end-to-end service, says AIM.

Not only is the technical support team tasked with ensuring AIM's product range is compliant and fit for purpose, together with the company's specification team they assist architects and contractors at the design stage, giving guidance on the selection of fire, thermal and acoustic insulation products based on in depth understanding of product performance, testing, materials, applications



and regulations.

"Expanding the technical support desk demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the correct specification and use of AIM products," explains Kevin Blake MIFSM, TIFireE. AIM's technical support manager for seven years, Kevin sits on the Association for Specialist Fire Protection's TG3 Fire Stopping and TG14 Fire Protection in External Facade Systems task groups and he contributes to British Standards.

"The biggest challenge with modern construction is finding the correct fire resistance certification. All too often fire testing standards are not representative of today's built environment, so proving a product's performance can be challenging. I work closely with regulatory bodies and approvers to find solutions to complex building designs," Kevin adds.

Tashan Johnson has moved from a senior role in AIM's technical sales team to concentrate on technical support working with Kevin. Tashan achieved the Institute of Fire Engineers Level 2 Passive Fire Protection qualification in 2024.

"My new role also involves engaging with installers, providing onsite training and advice and undertaking observation visits to check installation is in line with product guidance," explains Tashan. "We also deliver technical presentations in support of CPD."

01293 582400 www.aimlimited.co.uk

SIMONSWERK concealed pivot hinge shortlisted for product design & innovation award

SIMONSWERK's VT 845 concealed pivot hinge, featuring an integrated self-closing mechanism for rebated frame doors, has been recognised for innovation in architectural ironmongery.

The VT 845 concealed self-closing pivot hinge for aluminium framed doors within a rebated frame has been shortlisted at this year's GAI Specification Awards 2026 in the Mechanical Product Design & Innovation category.

Part of SIMONSWERK's VERTO range of self-closing pivot systems, the VT 845 combines a concealed pivot hinge with an integrated self-closing mechanism, eliminating the need for additional door control hardware while maintaining a clean architectural aesthetic. Fully concealed within the door profile, the system supports the minimal detailing increasingly

specified in contemporary interior design. Compact in design, the hinge delivers automatic, controlled closing alongside precise adjustability, including height adjustment and adjustable closing speeds. With minimal installation dimensions, the VT 845 offers a discreet yet highly engineered solution, ideally suited to modern residential and commercial environments where both aesthetics and performance are paramount.

Andrew Kite, managing director of SIMONSWERK UK, commented: "Being shortlisted at the GAI Specification Awards is a fantastic achievement for our team, and we are delighted that the VT 845 has been recognised by the industry.

"The VT 845 is a unique product within our range and reflects our continued focus on developing innovative hinge solutions. It offers architects and specifiers a discreet self-



closing solution that supports contemporary interior design while delivering the quality and reliability expected from SIMONSWERK."

The Guild of Architectural Ironmongers (GAI), in conjunction with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), hosts the Specification Awards to celebrate excellence in architectural ironmongery. Winners will be announced at the ceremony on 15 May 2026 at IET London: Savoy Place.

sales@simonswerk.co.uk
uk.simonswerk.com/en

Vent-Axia backs BEAMA's Climate Commitment



Vent-Axia is strengthening its Net-Zero commitments by supporting the BEAMA 2050 Connected Climate Commitment. Signing the Climate Commitment builds on long-standing work to reduce its environmental impact and support more sustainable manufacturing. The company aims to achieve Net Zero by 2040, a decade ahead of the UK Government's target. Vent-Axia's strategy is built around three pillars: Product – Engineer Sustainable Solutions; Planet – Improve Environmental Performance; and People – Connect People Together.

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NEWS FEATURE



Take advantage of the design opportunity in external porcelain tiles

Nick Bratt, national technical sales manager at tile adhesive manufacturer Palace Chemicals says that the exterior porcelain tile sector provides a popular design opportunity for architects, but correct installation is key to achieving a good result.

The 20 mm thick exterior porcelain tile sector is currently one of the fastest-growing areas of the tiling market. Smaller housebuilders are leading this trend, using high-quality outdoor finishes to differentiate their offer from their competitors. Traditional concrete slabs are increasingly seen as outdated, offering limited aesthetic appeal and posing ongoing challenges in terms of maintenance and cleaning.

From an architect's point of view, the use of porcelain tiles allows for much more freedom in design, colour and style. The tiles can mimic natural stone or have any other aesthetic effect, but with the added benefits of being porcelain, which cleans more easily, is easier to maintain and offers better slip resistance than pavers. The trend is gaining significant traction among landscape professionals and is a hot topic on social media. Timber decking has increasingly been superseded by composite or porcelain alternatives, driven primarily by their durability and longer lifecycle.

The impervious nature of porcelain tiles does however necessitate a more considered installation approach. The convention is that you have to lay a minimum of 100 mm compacted hardcore, with a 50 mm bed of mortar and then the back of the porcelain has to be primed with a slurry bond coat to create a key between the tile and the mortar. However there are systems on the market, such as Palace Chemicals' own Rock-Tite system, which do all of that, but will also allow you to reduce your mortar bed depth to 25 mm, meaning less dig-out, less mixing and less material – and you also get a guarantee over the whole system.

From an architect's point of view, the design possibilities are endless. If you have dwarf walls, for example, in an outdoor hospitality area, which has been laid with porcelain tiles, you can have corresponding and matching 10 mm tiles on the vertical surfaces. For fixing you use an S1 tile adhesive which is suitable for outdoor use. All tile fixing has to be solid bedded (dot and dab is not acceptable). It is important to stop moisture getting behind the tile and causing damage. An SBR primer should also be used in order to create a key between the mortar bed and the tile vertical substrate.

If porcelain tiles are installed correctly, from a design point of view the potential is enormous, enabling the finish of the whole area to be completed in any colour and texture that you want!

Supplied by Nick Bratt, national technical sales manager for Palace Chemicals

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Advanced's MxPro 5 4-loop panels achieve Environmental Product Declaration (EPD)

MxPro 5 four-loop fire alarm control panels from Advanced now hold an Environmental Product Declaration (EPD), providing independently verified data on the products' environmental impact across their full lifecycle.

Issued in accordance with EN 15804:2012+A2:2019 and ISO 14044/14025, and verified by BRE Global, the EPD delivers transparent, standardised environmental performance data to support sustainability-focused specification and whole-building assessment.

Environmental Product Declarations are increasingly used across the construction and building services sectors to provide comparable, verified data on a product's environmental impact. Developed using a life cycle assessment (LCA), an EPD quantifies impacts across each stage of a product's life, from raw material extraction and manufacturing through to transport, use, and end-of-life treatment.

For the MxPro 5 four-loop panels, the EPD presents cradle-to-grave environmental data,



including carbon footprint and other impact indicators, allowing consultants, designers and building owners to better understand how fire safety systems contribute to the overall environmental performance of a building or infrastructure project.

The declaration applies across the full range of MxPro 5 four-loop panel configurations, including standard and deep enclosure formats, cross-listed variants, and Axis EN software variants, ensuring consistent environmental data is available regardless of configuration or

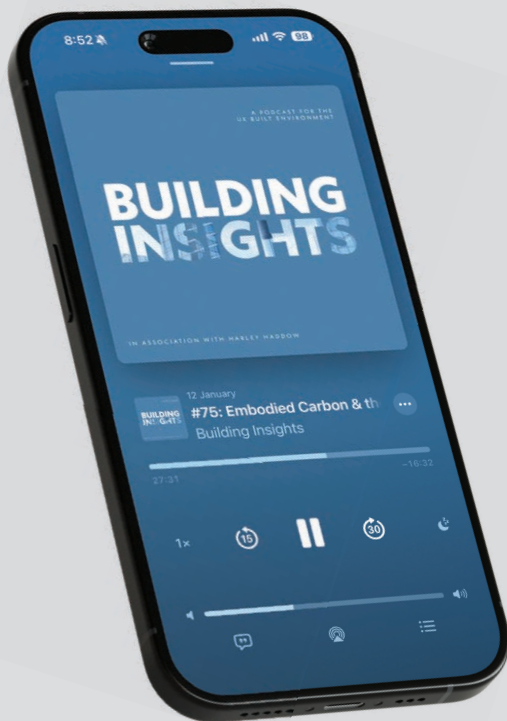
compliance requirements.

Beyond supporting external specification, the EPD is also valuable in supporting Advanced's drive for continuous improvement and responsible product design. By identifying where environmental impacts occur across the product lifecycle, the assessment provides insight informing ongoing product development, material selection, manufacturing efficiency and energy use during operation.

The MxPro 5 range has been developed with longevity, flexibility and upgradeability in mind, helping to extend system life and reduce waste over time. The addition of an independently verified EPD for the four-loop panels gives specifiers and end users the data they need to consider fire detection and alarm systems as part of a wider, more sustainable building strategy.

The EPD is valid for five years and will remain in force until March 2031, subject to the terms of the BRE Global verification scheme.

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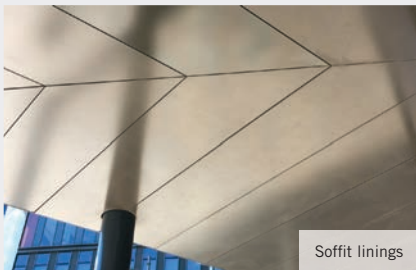
Form, function & finish with Vecta building linings

Encasement's Vecta building linings provide a comprehensive bespoke finishing system for use on a broad range of interior and exterior projects.

Building linings can perform several functions but specifications usually focus around their ability to improve aesthetics or provide a practical solution to a specific requirement, such as protecting interior walls in high traffic areas or concealing building services and structural elements.

To meet these diverse requirements, the Vecta range covers several different product groups, incorporating wall linings and lift lobby linings, as well as reveals, soffit linings and bulkheads. As their specifications will depend on factors, such as aesthetics, performance requirements and the building's use, a choice of materials is available within the range.

For example, metal or compact laminate wall linings are widely used on projects in the education, health, commercial, hotel & leisure sectors, as well as transport, retail and public buildings, for reasons of durability and the choice of finishes available.



Soffit linings

While usually specified for interior applications, some Vecta metal solutions, such as soffit linings and external bulkheads, are also designed for use on external projects, as they are inherently weather resistant. They can also incorporate PPC finishes in almost any RAL colour, which can help add exterior interest or branding to a building.

Vecta building lining solutions are fully bespoke manufactured to meet individual project dimensions and specifications, but to assist with their selection for different applications, Encasement has segmented them into three core product groups.

Lift lobby linings

A fundamental part of many commercial interiors, lift lobby linings help convey the character and style of a building by integrating

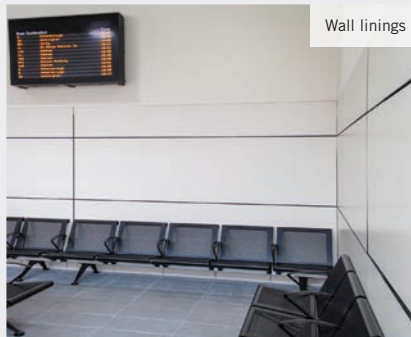


Lift lobby linings

with its overall design scheme. Similar to wall linings, a wide range of materials and finishes can be specified to provide increased design versatility for projects where aesthetics are a primary consideration.

Wall linings

Suitable for use in both interior and exterior applications where decorative or protective solutions are required, Vecta wall linings are ideal for environments where there are high levels of pedestrian traffic, such as transport hubs, retail or commercial buildings, to resist damage to internal walls.



Wall linings

Aluminium and stainless steel are commonly specified, although compact laminates are also widely used, as the almost limitless choice of laminate colours and textured finishes provides an extensive range of specification options. However, the

material specification is highly dependent on each application and whether it is an interior or exterior location.

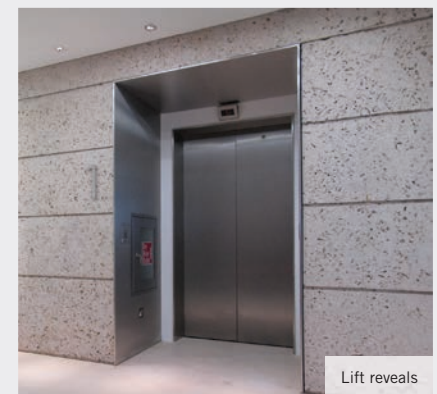
Bulkheads, soffits & reveals

Whether the requirement is for extensive services bulkheads, practical and decorative soffits or stylish lift reveals, Vecta provides a range of versatile and adaptable solutions.

Manufactured primarily from brushed or PPC aluminium as well as stainless steel, they are widely used to combine durable and decorative finishes with practical functionality, such as concealing building services, pipework or mechanical and electrical components.



01733 266 889

www.encasement.co.uk


Lift reveals

Magply boards top a Top 25 university's new energy centre



A university ranked in the top 25 of sustainable UK universities is using Magply's fire-resistant roofing boards on its latest project to help it achieve Carbon Net Zero from all energy by 2030 and from all emission scopes by 2035.

Some 1,500 m² of Magply's 12mm-thick boards, which meet Euroclass EN13501 (A1 Non-Combustible) standards and are BBA approved, were specified by renewable energy company Vital Energi for the roof of Energy Centre 2 at Lancaster University.

The magnesium oxysulfate boards were installed by specialist sub-contractor Axis Group to help provide a lightweight, flat surface for the waterproofing of the building at the heart of the university's investment in further decarbonising its Bailrigg campus.

As part of an adhered bituminous roofing system, the Magply boards were installed over metal roof deck sheets with tapered insulation and waterproofing to form a flat non-combustible surface for the roofing system.

Situated on the outer edge of its south-east Lancaster campus, Energy Centre 2 is part of a sector-leading renewable energy project to virtually eliminate the use of gas to heat the university's Bailrigg campus.

The new energy centre will house an

innovative array of state-of-the-art air and water source heat pumps totaling 7 MW, along with four 250 kW e-boilers totaling 1MW generating a projected 39 Gigawatt hours (GWh) of low carbon heat - enough to heat 95% of campus buildings. The centre will also include 1,500 m³ of thermal stores which will supplement the new heat supply and help ensure consistent heat during peak times of the day.



A visitor facility will also be incorporated into the design of the new energy centre. This will feature an educational meeting room for visitors from other universities, local schools and community groups with an interest in sustainable energy, specifically heat networks.

To carry the heat across campus, 6.5 km of district heating pipework is also being installed to increase the network's coverage from approximately 65% of buildings to 95%. This will be connected to more than 200 properties from the district heat network to receive low-carbon heat and water.

The project is expected to be completed in early 2027. The university has also recently completed a 11.3 MW solar farm, on 52 acres of university land east of the M6.

Vital Energi's regional director Scott Lutton said: "The new energy centre, utilising air and water source heat pump technology, will save 2,700 tonnes of carbon annually, making a significant contribution to Lancaster University's journey towards carbon neutrality."

Energy Centre 2 is the latest addition to Lancaster University's extensive portfolio of pioneering sustainability projects, reflecting its long-standing commitment to sustainability. It is home to one of the largest environmental science research centres in Europe.

*2026 QS World University Rankings: Sustainability

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The commercial case for building with timber

The industry has focused on the speed and sustainability credentials of building with timber, but some of its most compelling advantages are commercial, as Paul Newman at the Structural Timber Association explains.

The Government's ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes by 2029 is proving deeply contentious. A recent survey published in LABM found that fewer than 1% of public sector housing professionals believe the target is achievable under current policy, with even the most optimistic scenario – significant policy reform – convincing less than a third that it can be done.

The sixth edition of the Home Builders Federation's 'State of Play' report also paints a stark picture for SME housebuilders, with an overwhelming 97% of respondents believing the Government's home target is either 'very' or 'somewhat unachievable,' with 88% describing it as 'very unachievable.' Planning delays remain a significant barrier to growth, along with the squeeze placed on SMEs

from the burdensome taxation and regulatory environment.

This is a sobering backdrop for an industry already grappling with cost pressures and the spectre of increased skills shortages.

Despite this, SMEs remain willing to build more. The HBF's report's central message is clear: with meaningful, swift reform – particularly to planning – the sector has the capacity to significantly increase output and play a decisive role in meeting the country's housing needs. And herein lies an opportunity, with timber frame construction being one of the most practical tools available to close the gap.

The industry is more than aware of the need to prioritise sustainability. Timber has rightly emerged as a key material for achieving the UK's net zero targets. However, the advantages of timber go far beyond its environmental credentials, and it is the commercial case that deserves far greater attention from architects, developers and housing associations alike.

Speed that changes the economics of housebuilding

Timber-framed homes can be constructed in as little as 15 weeks, significantly faster than the 26-30 weeks typically required for typical masonry methods. That accelerated timeline translates directly into cost savings, reduced project risk and greater programme certainty; qualities that are paramount when housing pipelines are under intense scrutiny. Timber-framed structures also become weather-tight six to 10 weeks sooner than masonry equivalents, meaning internal trades can mobilise earlier and projects complete faster. In an environment where every week onsite carries a cost, this is a material advantage in every sense.

Timber-framed homes can be constructed in as little as 15 weeks, significantly faster than the 26-30 weeks typically required for typical masonry methods



Efficiency that stacks up commercially

Beyond raw build speed, timber frame generates significantly less waste than traditional construction methods, minimising landfill contributions and reducing the unpredictability of weather-related delays. The just-in-time approach inherent to offsite manufacturing enhances project management, tightening programmes and supporting cost control. For affordable housing providers and high-volume developers working to thin margins, these operational efficiencies make timber not just an environmentally responsible choice, but a commercially attractive one.

The critical importance of early supply chain engagement

The commercial benefits of timber are not automatic; they are unlocked through good decisions made early. This is where the wider industry must sharpen its approach. Architects and designers need to engage with the timber supply chain at the earliest possible stage, long before detailed design is fixed. Early collaboration with manufacturers allows projects to be genuinely optimised for offsite delivery, rather than simply substituting timber for masonry in a design that was never conceived for it.

Understanding the range of timber frame systems available, from timber frame to structural insulated panels (SIPs) and cross-laminated timber (CLT), is essential to making the right specification choice for each project type. Early engagement also ensures that compliance requirements around fire, acoustics and durability are embedded from the outset, avoiding costly redesigns downstream and giving clients the programme certainty they need to commit.

The supply chain itself has invested significantly in capacity and capability. Manufacturers can offer design support, structural engineering input and offsite fabrication that de-risks projects for clients and main contractors alike. But that value is only available to those who come to the table early enough to use it.

Competency as the foundation for confidence

Realising timber's full commercial potential depends on a workforce that understands the material, from architects making specification decisions to site managers



overseeing installation. The sector faces a persistent challenge here: timber construction remains underrepresented in formal architectural education, CPD provision focused on timber engineering is limited, and there is a shortage of tradespeople trained in the correct installation of timber systems.

Industry bodies play a vital role in bridging these gaps, providing technical resources, training programmes and membership schemes that increase knowledge across the profession. Equipping architects with the information they need to make informed decisions is not an abstract goal; it has a direct bearing on project outcomes, programme performance and ultimately on how many homes get built.

The opportunity in front of us

Timber frame cannot solve all the above highlighted problems, but it can meaningfully address the speed, cost and efficiency challenges that sit alongside them. In a market where every efficiency matters and every week saved has financial value, the case for timber is not just compelling – it is urgent. The industry has the tools. The task now is ensuring that architects, clients and contractors have the knowledge, the supply chain relationships and the confidence to use them.

Paul Newman is technical director at the Structural Timber Association

In a market where every efficiency matters and every week saved has financial value, the case for timber is not just compelling – it is urgent

AG strengthens brick offering with clay-like range

AG, a Tyrone headquartered, manufacturer of low carbon paving and building products, has launched Heathfield, a new clay-like concrete brick range designed to challenge long-held assumptions about what brick should be.

Developed in response to growing pressure on traditional clay supply, rising energy costs and increasing demand for consistent, reliable materials, Heathfield delivers the authentic appearance of clay with the performance, availability and sustainability of precision-engineered concrete.

The launch marks the latest step in AG's continued investment in innovation that gives developers and specifiers greater confidence in an increasingly unpredictable market.

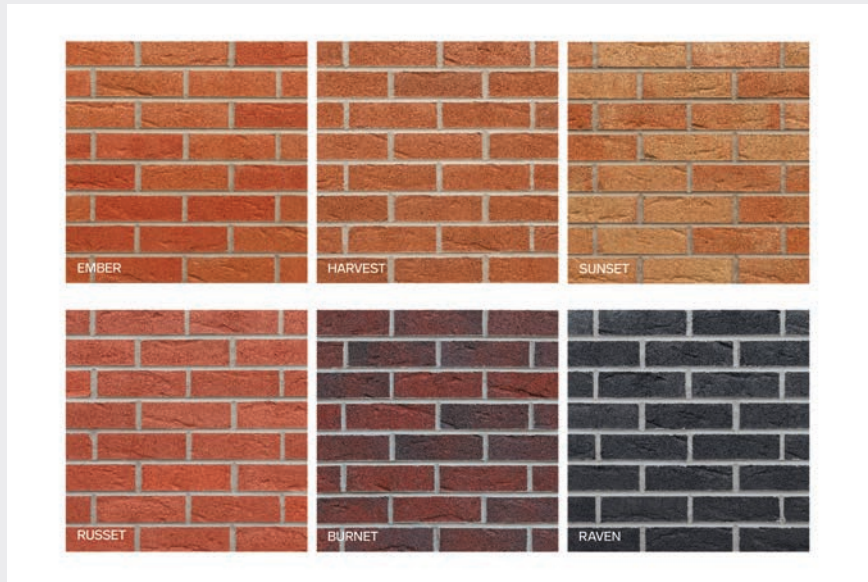
Each brick is moulded directly from clay samples, with varied embossing applied across each slice offering 27 unique patterns to replicate the natural, irregular surface of clay.

This creates a non-repetitive, organic finish across elevations, delivering a timeless aesthetic while avoiding the common challenges of traditional clay.

Produced in the third generation company's state-of-the-art facilities using Enduur 1 advanced concrete technology, Heathfield offers enhanced strength, durability, UV resistance, and hydrophobic performance.

Two teardrop-shaped perforations also enhance density and structural strength compared with traditional three-holed bricks. With water absorption around 6% much lower than clay's 15-20%, and no soluble salts in the mix, Heathfield significantly reduces the risk of efflorescence on site.

Cured with renewable energy, the range is more consistent in size than traditional clay, creating uniform bedding joints,



sharper finishes, and quicker, more reliable installation while avoiding the uneven joints caused by warped, energy-intensive kiln-fired bricks.

Sustainably produced using aggregates from AG's own quarry, including limestone to enrich colour, the range delivers consistent tones throughout each brick. Currently offered in six traditional colourways, with more planned, the collection provides architects and developers with flexible design options across housing, education and commercial projects.

Building on the success of AG's Woodward bricks, named Responsible Product of the Year 2025 by Business in the Community, Heathfield delivers the same innovative, high-performance qualities as an alternative to traditional clay bricks.

Backed by a 60-year guarantee, Heathfield is produced locally in the UK, with typical lead times of just three to five working days, giving builders and specifiers confidence even in unpredictable markets.

With energy prices and global supply chains under pressure, many construction materials face significant risk. AG's low-energy, UK-based manufacturing avoids that exposure, ensuring reliable supply, consistent quality, and a partner customers can trust for the long term.

The newly launched range is also part of AG's broader portfolio of building

products, including paving and walling solutions, providing specifiers and developers with a complete, one-stop solution for external materials.

Commenting on the launch, AG CEO Stephen Acheson said:

"The success of our Woodward range proved that concrete bricks can genuinely compete with, and in many cases outperform, traditional clay. Heathfield builds on that momentum and represents a further step forward in how the industry thinks about brick."

"We set out to create a product that delivers the character and warmth of clay while removing many of the challenges that developers, specifiers and bricklayers experience on site. Every detail has been carefully engineered, informed by close collaboration with the people who use our products day in, day out."

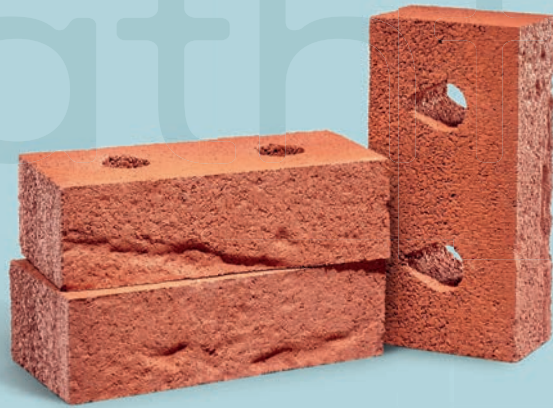
"As the market continues to rethink material choices in light of cost, availability and sustainability pressures, Heathfield offers a confident alternative. We believe products like this will play an increasingly important role in the future of construction, and we are proud to be leading that shift."

Samples of the Heathfield range are now available.

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Thermomur® ICF from BEWI features in new build property with outstanding thermal performance

When engineer Andrew Brash and his wife were looking to build a forever retirement home in the Suffolk village that they love, Andrew was immediately attracted to the elegance of an Insulating Concrete Formwork (ICF) solution.

It was the thermal performance and simplicity that particularly appealed. He also liked the durability of ICF: “If we were going to build a house with our name on it, we wanted something that was going to be around for a long time,” he says.

‘Mouses’ is a build of 330 m² on a 0.6-acre plot, which was completed in just 14 months, despite the large size of the building, reflecting the ease with which projects can be carried out using ICF.

The product selected was BEWI’s Thermomur® 350 Super, which is designed to provide an outstanding thermal performance (with a U-value of 0.15 W/m²K), and has full NHBC and BBA approval, while also



enabling a fast and efficient build. The cost/performance equation was viewed as a key benefit, which could provide the thermal performance necessary to gain a Passivehouse rating. The house also easily achieved its airtightness target. From a practical point of view, the ability to screw into the sides of the blocks and the way they all fit together also makes for a more straightforward build

than with other systems, while generating less waste.

“We find the performance of the completed house to be absolutely fantastic,” says Andrew. “When combined with triple glazing, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, solar panels and a heat pump, we estimate that our total electric costs each year for everything on this large house will be less than £200.”

The flexibility of the system meant that the team were able to deal with challenges as they arose on the job. Two recommendations which Andrew has, having completed his project, are to design any ICF self-build around the block dimensions as far as possible, to minimise cutting, and also to take maximum advantage of the training which is provided by BEWI for contractors without ICF experience who use the company’s Thermomur® system.

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Interpon introduces the new Futura 2026–2029 Collection

AkzoNobel Powder Coatings has launched the new superdurable Interpon D2525 Futura 2026-2029 Collection, now available across Europe and North America. Drawing on the enduring beauty of classic design while embracing the bold expressions shaping tomorrow's buildings, the collection brings together expressive finishes, advanced textures, and a refreshed vision for the built environment.

Designed to show where architectural color is headed next, the new Futura 2026-2029 Collection gives architects and designers a modern toolkit to create on-trend spaces for work, leisure and relaxation, to be enjoyed for decades to come.

A fusion of past influence and future ambition

An iconic cornerstone in architectural design for more than two decades, Futura has long guided the industry's approach to color, finish, and material expression. The 2026-2029 Collection continues that legacy with two palettes that

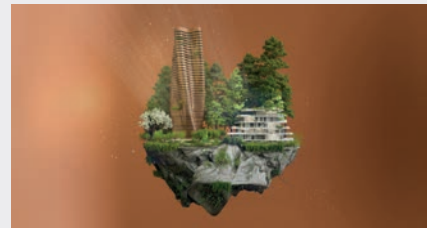
connect generations of design in a single creative language supported by long-lasting performance that will endure time, weather, and wear:

- High Serenity offers soft, nature-inspired hues including warm stone, calming metals and quiet browns to elevate spaces with subtle texture and understated elegance.
- Bold Adventure brings energy and momentum, with dynamic colors that glisten and sparkle through earthy reds, regal blues, and finishes designed to inspire confidence and exploration.

Sustainability built in – as a standard

Every color in the Futura 2026-2029 Collection now comes with sustainability built in. Not only its superdurability, extending product lifecycles, but also with Low-E curing across all new colors, and bio-attributed raw materials as standard across the entire range manufactured in the EMEA region.

- Low-E technology supports curing at lower temperatures or faster line speeds,



helping reduce energy use and unlock operational efficiency.

- Bio-attributed raw materials support a lower carbon footprint, aligning with the reality that sustainable choices must also be practical, available, and high-performing.

This built-in sustainability places the new Futura Collection squarely within the Interpon Eco+ portfolio – AkzoNobel's most advanced and rigorously proven sustainable powder coatings. Futura reflects Interpon's value-driven sustainability philosophy of delivering solutions that perform on the line, reduce energy use, and support long-lasting design without asking customers to compromise.

www.interpon.com/gb/en/products/architectural/interpon-d-futura-2026-2029

Installing contractor puts forward Wraptite® membrane for Manchester PBSA development

The installing contractor at a high-rise PBSA (purpose-built student accommodation) development has shown their confidence in Proctor Group's Wraptite® external air barrier by putting the product forward for use on the facade.

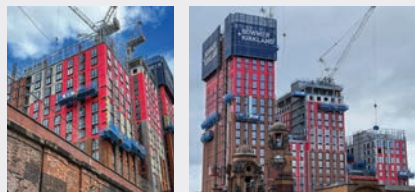
The Echo Street development comprises three towers, of 16, 21 and 27 storeys, with 11 and 15 storey links between them.

As part of regenerating a gateway site in the city centre, the finished scheme is targeting a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating. Air source heat pumps and solar PV panels form part of an all-electric approach. In addition, the linking sections have green roofs.

Comprehensive technical support key to ongoing relationship

The willingness of Eire Facades, the installing contractor, to propose Wraptite as an alternative to the specified membrane shows the extent of their trust in the product.

This confidence is rooted in their



relationship with Proctor Group and the technical support the manufacturer has provided across multiple projects – including Echo Street.

Delivering building performance means getting the most out of quality products. To that end, Proctor Group gave toolbox talks to three project managers. All were receptive to the training, and it was clear from the Proctor Group's subsequent site visits that the information was followed. The standard of installation was very good across the entire development.

“What truly sets Wraptite apart is the support behind it,” said Shaun Farnhill, Project

Manager at Eire Facades. “The technical support team is incredibly knowledgeable and responsive, whether providing guidance during installation or helping to troubleshoot unique project challenges. We know we're backed by a team that values precision and performance as much as we do.”

“The product is outstanding,” added Shaun. “Durable, reliable, and easy to work with. It provides excellent airtightness and weather protection, helping us meet stringent performance standards without compromising on installation efficiency.”

Wraptite provides a consistent airtight seal that contributes to meeting a project's airtightness target, while also being highly vapour permeable. That vapour permeability allows the passage of moisture vapour out of the structure, avoiding any increase in condensation risk.

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proctorgroup.com/products/wraptite



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ASWS wins contract at Glasshouse Street



Associated Steel Window Services (ASWS) has been appointed to undertake the full refurbishment of 78 steel lightwell windows and 43 timber windows for a project on 21-29 Glasshouse Street. Over two decades ago, ASWS

completed a light refurbishment works project across the whole building. Today, the specialist will undertake the refurbishment of the steel-framed lightwell windows as well as the timber windows on level 5 and 6. The schedule includes an off-site refurbishment scope including full paint strip, reglazing with thermal upgrades to slim double-glazed units with full repairs and redecoration.

asws.co.uk

Why water authorities turn to T-T



T-T is regularly asked to review and support wastewater designs where long-term operational performance is critical. That trust is built on one thing: experience grounded in evidence. Recently, T-T challenged a request from another UK NAV to increase the diameter of a rising main. The reasoning followed familiar industry assumptions that larger pipes are more reliable, reduce blockage risk, and better suit commonly available pump configurations. T-T's review showed otherwise. T-T validate, emulate, and assess designs against real operational data, the same conditions assets will face once they are built, commissioned, and maintained.

www.ttpumps.com

Siderise launches a new range of passive fire protection products for precast concrete facades



Siderise has launched its new PC-FS Firestop and PC-CB Cavity Barrier product range – a passive fire protection package developed specifically for precast concrete cladding systems. Siderise approached this application to develop a dedicated solution that has been comprehensively tested, while addressing the practical challenges associated with these systems, such as tight tolerances, limited access, complex interfaces and construction sequencing. The stone wool Lamella core provides built-in compression and, alongside a bracket-free fix for narrow voids, contributes to faster installation times compared to less compressible barriers. PC-FS Firestop and PC-CB Cavity Barrier can also be fit from above or below the slab – making them ideal where topside access is restricted, or when sequencing requires alternative installation approaches. Both products are tested to EN 1366-4 (Resistance to fire) and EN 13501-1 (Reaction to fire) standards, with supplementary fire test evidence for precast concrete panel bracket penetration, end of flexible wall configuration, and firestop bracket securement to the underside of the slab edge to support a wider range of project conditions.

enquiries@siderise.com siderise.com

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360° room comfort

Senior opens the door (and window) to greater transparency with new EPD releases

Senior Architectural Systems has expanded its suite of independently verified Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) to give architects and contractors even greater confidence and clarity when assessing the environmental impact of some of the manufacturer's most popular fenestration systems.

Following the publication of the EPD for its SF52 mullion drained curtain wall, Senior has now released new declarations for its PURE[®] Commercial Door, PURE[®] Casement and PURE[®] Tilt & Turn aluminium windows, plus the zone drained version of its SF52 curtain wall system.

Senior has been keen to challenge the traditional format of EPDs, and specifically those for aluminium fenestration systems, which has been underpinned by the company's pledge to customers that 'what you see is what you spec'.

The new publications continue Senior's commitment to providing transparent, specification-ready data that reflects the true performance of the fenestration systems being designed into a project and each new EPD follows the same methodology that set the SF52 mullion drained curtain wall EPD apart. By removing insulated glass units from the calculations, the data focuses solely on the aluminium system itself. This prevents artificially low carbon figures and gives a more accurate representation of the product's impact per square metre.

Architects and contractors working across a range of building types also benefit from the non-linear scaling approach used throughout Senior's suite of EPDs. Instead of relying on a single reference size, multiple system sizes for each product have been independently verified and consolidated into one document. This allows for more precise modelling at the early design stages and supports more robust comparisons between facade options.

Another key way that Senior is taking a different approach is by ensuring the new EPDs all include the environmental impact of profile extrusion and non-aluminium components such as thermal breaks, gaskets and fixings. These elements are often excluded from conventional EPDs, yet they can significantly influence the overall footprint of a facade system. Their



inclusion gives architects and contractors a more complete picture of the materials they are specifying and supports more accurate whole-building assessments.

The PURE[®] Commercial Door, PURE[®] Casement window and PURE[®] Tilt & Turn window systems all feature Senior's patented expanded polyurethane thermal break, delivering high thermal performance without compromising design flexibility. The new EPDs provide verified data that further supports the proven thermal performance of the PURE[®] system which has the potential to deliver low U-values that exceed current building regulations.

Commenting on the publication of the company's new Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), Senior's UK sustainability lead Luke Osborne said: "The expansion of our EPD portfolio reflects Senior's long-term commitment to responsible manufacturing and meaningful sustainability reporting. Our latest EPDs give the level of clarity and detail we know our customers are looking for to make informed

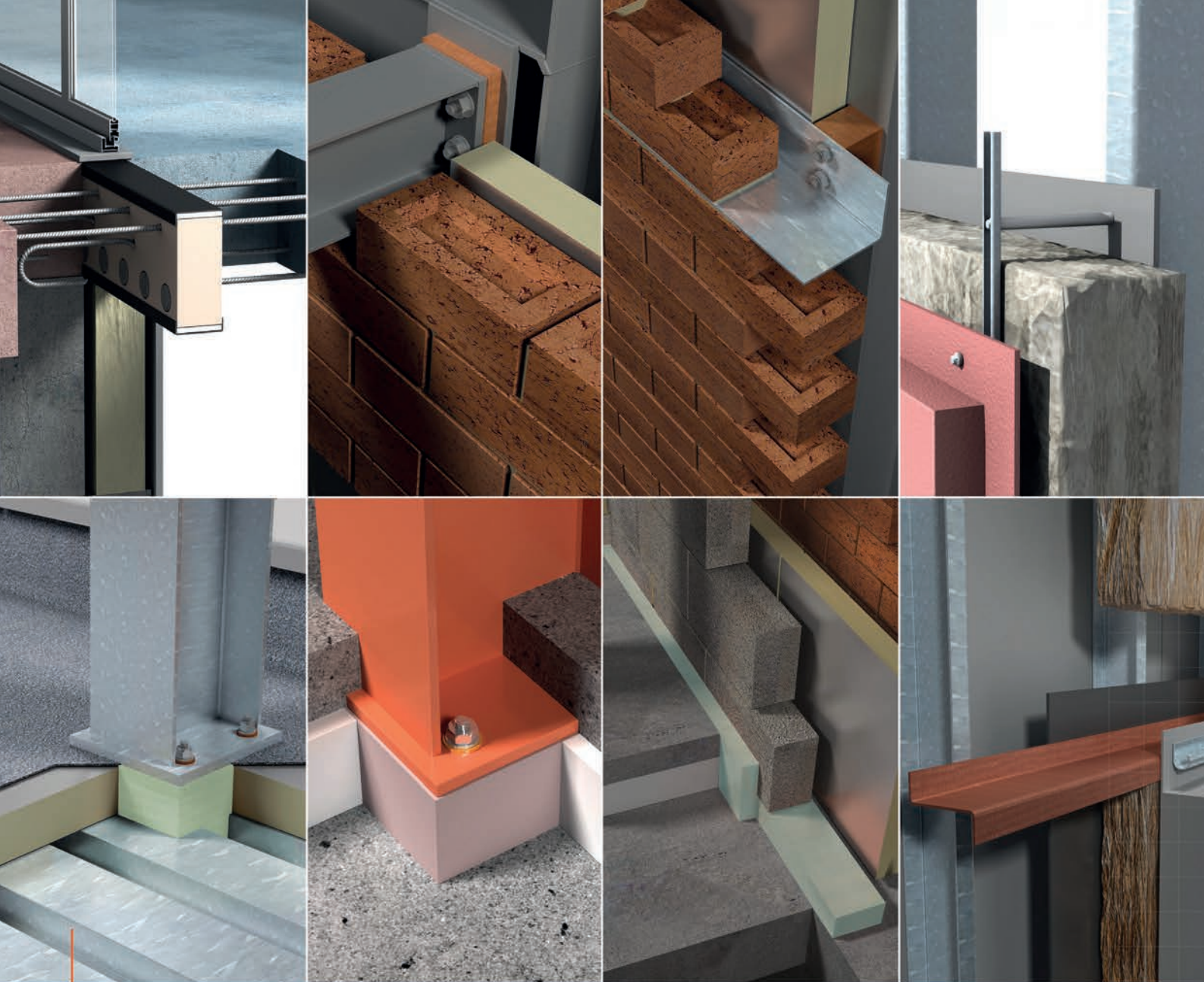
decisions at concept stage and throughout the specification process. By including all product elements as part of our EPDs we're able to produce much more accurate data and I'm proud that this approach makes them deliberately different to other EPDs for comparable systems.

"Our commitment to providing greater transparency is matched by our desire to help specifiers to better understand the complex information presented in the EPDs. We are always on hand to answer any questions that any of our customers may have to ensure that our EPDs truly are a helpful and reliable resource."

All new EPDs are available to download via Senior's NBS Source profile or directly from the company's sustainability team.

For more information, please visit www.seniorarchitectural.co.uk or search for Senior Architectural Systems on LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.

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Community hub benefits from TORMAX

Recently redeveloped, the Sutton Life Centre is a vibrant community and education hub in South London, offering a blend of learning, leisure, and civic facilities. TORMAX was contracted to design, manufacture and install a new automatic entrance solution. Powered by iMotion door drives, two sets of bi-parting automatic sliding doors work in tandem to create a thermally efficient lobby. Further contributing to reduced heat loss from the building, the outer set of sliding doors incorporates the technologically advanced TORMAX LR32 Secure + Therm profile. This system has a very narrow, compact design with circumferential seals that reduce the exchange of cold and warm air. The new entrance effortlessly combines security, energy efficiency and long-term operational performance for this high-traffic public access point. At the heart of the installation is TORMAX's advanced iMotion drive technology. sales@tormax.co.uk



Single source solution for fire rated products

Aluminium systems company AluK has added fire rated window and door products to its range – providing a simple, single source solution for specifiers, fabricators and installers working on projects with specific requirements for fire protection. AluK has formed a strategic partnership with Aluflam, one of Europe's leading specialists in proven fire protection systems, to offer ready-made aluminium windows, doors and curtain walling systems to customers in the UK, which are independently fire-tested and compliant and available on short lead times. AluK's move is all about simplifying and speeding up the procurement process without compromising on performance, choice or aesthetics. There are now three core Aluflam product ranges in AluK's fire rated offering, which suit the vast majority of applications in the UK. These all have full independent test data available to demonstrate performance and compliance, and all come with comprehensive design support and coordinated technical assistance from AluK and the Aluflam Group teams in Europe.

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Hörmann SPU F42 door delivers reliability and performance for RNLI Lifeboat Station

Hörmann UK industrial trade partner, Norwich-based Cooks Doors, has successfully completed the installation of a Hörmann SPU F42 sectional door at the RNLI Lifeboat Station in Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire. Designed to perform in some of the UK's most demanding environments, the new door provides the RNLI with a robust, reliable, and highly efficient solution to support its vital operations. Measuring an impressive 7,500 x 3,650 mm, the SPU F42 sectional door was specified for its strength, durability, and consistent performance in what is a challenging coastal setting. Manufactured from galvanised steel with a solid, double-skinned construction and a high-grade polyurethane foam core, the door offers excellent thermal efficiency, helping to maintain a stable internal environment within the lifeboat station. With a thermal insulation value of 1.2 W/m²K, the door helps reduce heat loss, supporting energy efficiency and



creating a more comfortable working space for the RNLI crew.

Given the exposed coastal location, resistance to the elements was a key consideration. The SPU F42 achieves Class 3 performance for both wind load and water tightness, helping to protect the station interior, equipment, and lifeboats from harsh weather conditions. Additional corrosion protection has been applied to the door fittings to further enhance longevity, ensuring reliable operation despite constant exposure to salty sea air.

The door is finished externally in Gentian blue (RAL 5010), complementing the lifeboat station's appearance, while the off-white interior finish (RAL 9002) helps to brighten the internal space. Two rows of vision panels were incorporated into the design, allowing increased natural light into the building and improving visibility without compromising strength or security.

Operational reliability is critical for the RNLI, where rapid response times are essential. The SPU F42 is powered by a 400v three-phase operator, providing smooth, dependable day-to-day operation. In the event of a power failure, a manual hand chain ensures the door can be operated, maintaining access at all times. Safety has also been prioritised, with an integrated safety edge that automatically stops the door if an obstruction is detected, helping to protect personnel, vehicles, and equipment.

01530 516868 www.hormann.co.uk

A fresh look from Garador: Launch of its new website

Garador has launched its new website, delivering an improved digital experience for customers and partners.

The redesigned site introduces a more modern look and feel, alongside enhanced navigation to help users access key information quickly and easily. With a strong focus on usability, the updated platform ensures visitors can find what they're looking for with minimal effort, whether browsing

on desktop or mobile.

The new website features a clearer structure and improved layout, allowing users to move seamlessly between different sections. Visitors can now explore company information, stay up to date with the latest news, and access contact details through a more intuitive and streamlined journey.

In addition to improved navigation, the refreshed design provides a more consistent experience across all pages, helping users engage with content more effectively. The site has been developed to support both existing customers and new visitors, offering a straightforward way to learn more about Garador and its offering.

Sam Todd, commercial manager at Garador, said: "The new website represents an important step forward in how we present information online. It provides a much-improved experience and makes it easier for customers to find what they need."

The launch reflects Garador's ongoing



commitment to improving customer experience and strengthening its digital presence. As the business continues to evolve, the website will play a key role in supporting communication, accessibility, and engagement with customers and partners alike.

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V A L C A N

The Defining Standard

EJOT CROSSFIX raises the bar on rainscreen facade performance

EJOT's all-stainless steel facade substructure system CROSSFIX can play an instrumental role in the delivery of higher performing, more sustainable and stronger rear ventilated or rainscreen facades.

This complete framing system, backed with a comprehensive European Technical Assessment (ETA) to independently confirm its performance, is compatible with all types of building substrates, insulation materials and cladding. It is supplied as a package by EJOT UK including all the brackets, rails, anchors and fasteners, plus the 'Powerkey' to optimise load distribution between anchors, required to assemble a robust sub-frame that achieves significantly higher load-bearing capacities than other substructures.

Discover CROSSFIX at Zak World of Facades

Attendees at the Zak World of Facades event in Manchester in June will be able to find out more about the contribution that CROSSFIX can make to facade projects. The EJOT UK team will be exhibiting to give architects and facade designers the opportunity to discuss the technical characteristics of the system and its design features in depth.

Reduced thermal bridging + greater strength = less material use

One of the major advantages offered by CROSSFIX is its stainless steel composition, which offers low thermal conductivity compared to aluminium. As each bracket in the substructure provides the potential for a thermal bridge to develop, by reducing the amount of thermal transfer through the brackets, heat loss can be cut.



Stainless steel brackets have an additional advantage given the material's relatively higher strength. This means, compared to facade substructures created using standard aluminium systems, fewer brackets are required with CROSSFIX – and with fewer structural connections from the building substrate to the outer sheet, a further reduction in thermal bridging is achieved.

These thermal efficiencies can enable a reduced insulation depth without compromising Uvalues, potentially decreasing the wall thickness, increasing usable floor space and reducing insulation volumes. Combined with stainless steel's recyclability and verified EPDs supporting BREEAM, LEED and Passivhaus, this makes CROSSFIX well suited to projects with more ambitious sustainability targets.

Designed for both vertical and horizontal systems

The design of the CROSSFIX Konsole bracket means it can be used with both vertical and horizontal rails, offering greater design flexibility and allowing rail orientation to suit cladding formats and joint alignment.

Its dual capability simplifies adaptation to complex geometries, facade setbacks and mixed cladding systems, and it is especially valuable where materials change late in the design process. It also enables designers to select the most efficient load path without redesigning layouts or switching

substructure systems. In addition, CROSSFIX provides generous tolerance compensation for uneven substrates, making alignment easier on site, reducing shimming and rework and delivering cleaner facade lines with faster installation.

First rate fire performance

Being manufactured from stainless steel, CROSSFIX is well suited to modern fire safety requirements. The material maintains good strength at high temperatures, retaining around 55% of its strength at 700°C. As a result, the system achieves an A1 fire rating under EN 135011, making it a robust, noncombustible alternative to aluminium or hybrid substructures.

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Designing airtightness into the build: What Modern Methods of Construction changes

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) has been gathering momentum across the UK for some years now, and the reasons are well understood. Faster programmes, reduced site labour, better quality control and more predictable outcomes. For architects, MMC also offers something that traditional on-site construction has always struggled to deliver consistently: the assurance that what was designed is actually what gets built.

Airtightness is a good example of where this distinction matters. On a conventional build, airtightness is heavily dependent on the standard of workmanship at any given moment on any given day. Weather, sequencing, subcontractor coordination and the sheer variability of manual installation all introduce risk. The designed air permeability target, unfortunately, doesn't always match the figure recorded at the pressure test.

Factory-based MMC changes this dynamic considerably. Controlled production environments mean consistent material supply, accurate cutting and fixing, and quality checks at every stage. Whether computer-aided or robotically assisted, the process removes much of the human variability that causes airtightness failures on site. Panels and modules can be assembled to tight tolerances in conditions that no open building site can replicate, which means designed-in airtightness is far more likely to be achieved and verified before anything leaves the factory.

That said, MMC doesn't eliminate the airtightness challenge entirely. It relocates it. The factory-built envelope may be excellent, but the interfaces between panels and modules — the connections made on site as the building is assembled — remain the critical weak points. Joints, corners, window and door openings, service penetrations: these are where the performance of an otherwise well-controlled build-up can unravel, and where specification decisions made at the drawing board have the most direct impact on what the building actually delivers.

Where membrane specification comes in

For MMC projects, the membrane needs to do two things well. It needs to perform reliably in a factory environment — easy to apply, consistent in adhesion across the substrates



used in panelised or volumetric systems, and robust enough to survive handling, transport, weather and on-site assembly. And it needs to maintain airtightness at the junctions and openings that are made good once the building is in place.

Proshield® from Don & Low for walls and floors addresses both. Its self-adhesive backing means it can be applied quickly and accurately in a factory setting without primers, tapes or mechanical fixings, and it bonds directly to the substrates most commonly used in MMC construction: OSB, calcium silicate board, fibre cement, gypsum board, steel, concrete and timber. A printed alignment grid is built into the membrane surface, which helps with consistent, repeatable positioning. That's particularly useful when the same detail is being applied across hundreds of panels in a production run.

The bold blue colour is a practical asset. It makes joints, overlaps and any gaps immediately visible during quality inspection, both in the factory and during on-site assembly. In a process built around repeatability and quality control, that visual clarity has real value.

On airtightness performance, Proshield® has achieved KIWA certification, an independent verification that it performs as a truly airtight solution not just on uninterrupted panel surfaces, but at edges, corners and openings. This is the detail that

separates a membrane that works in theory from one that works in the real world. A full suite of matching tapes and preformed corners supports consistent, repeatable detailing at junctions, so the same standard of airtightness can be achieved across every connection in the assembly.

For projects targeting Passivhaus certification or designs influenced by Passivhaus principles, that level of verified, repeatable performance at the details is what determines whether the standard is met or missed. Proshield® contributes directly to achieving the airtightness levels those standards demand.

Class W1 water resistance, the highest classification available, means the membrane performs across all geographical locations and exposure conditions in the UK. Plus, Proshield's Environmental Product Declaration gives specifiers the documented environmental data increasingly required for responsible procurement and Scope 3 carbon reporting.

MMC is changing the way architects think about construction quality and performance. Airtightness is one of the areas where that change is most tangible but only if the specification supports it all the way through the assembly, not just across the easy stretches.

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Manchester June 2026

Integrating digital in the roof

Dan Redfern at Marley discusses how digital integration is reducing risk, saving time and reshaping the way architects approach roof specification.

Roof specification has never been a tick-box exercise – but it is becoming significantly more complex. Today’s architect must navigate evolving regulations, heightened accountability, increased scrutiny around compliance, and the growing expectation that renewable technologies are integrated seamlessly into the building fabric. At the same time, programmes are tighter, resources are stretched, and the tolerance for error is smaller than ever.

In this environment, fragmented tools, manual cross-referencing of standards, and repeated data entry across disconnected systems are no longer fit for purpose. Instead, systems must reduce risk and improve efficiency.

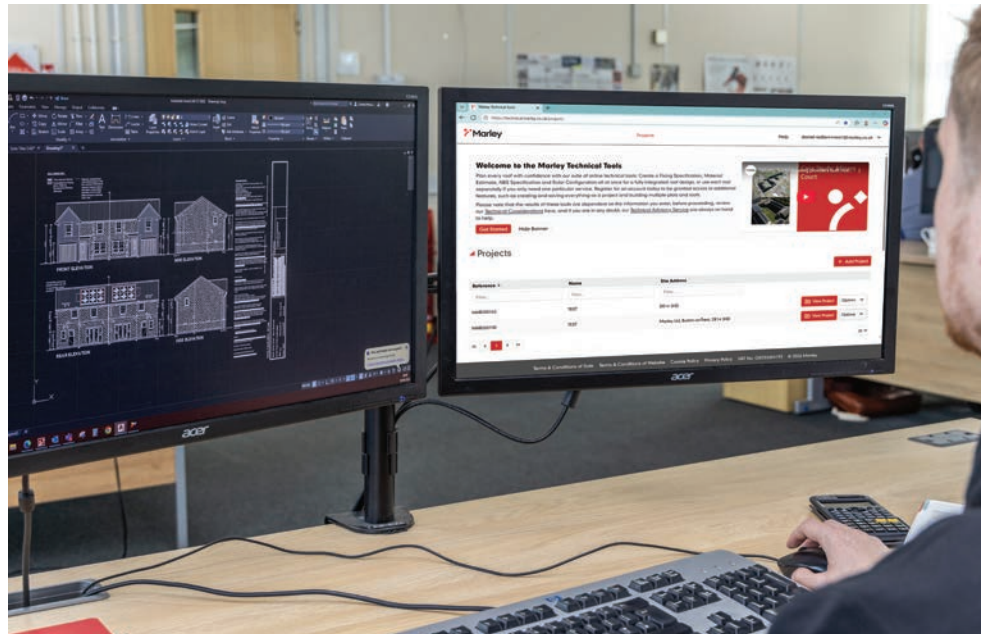
This is what has shaped the development of our new Technical Tools platform: an integrated digital hub designed to bring clarity, coordination and compliance assurance to roofing specification.

Integration over fragmentation

One of the most persistent inefficiencies in specification is duplication. Project data is often entered into multiple systems – to assess product suitability, generate fixing calculations and produce documentation – introducing delay and the potential for inconsistency.

An integrated platform removes that friction. By consolidating roofing design tools into a single interface, architects can move from product selection to fixing specification and documentation within one coordinated workflow. The result is less administration, fewer opportunities for error, and a clearer link between design intent and technical output.

Multi-plot capability supports efficiency on larger or phased developments, enabling different house types or roof designs to be managed within one project. Individual roof slopes can be configured independently to accommodate variations in pitch, ridge height or tile choice, allowing complexity to be handled without losing control.



An integrated archive of live and completed projects creates a transparent audit trail. Specifications can be reviewed or amended at any stage, supporting internal sign-off, and demonstrating due diligence when required.

The integration of solar PV is a key requirement that has traditionally introduced challenges, particularly when considered late in the design process. By embedding a solar PV configurator directly within the platform panel numbers, flashings and associated components are calculated automatically, alongside guidance on potential kilowatt output. Roof tile quantities are adjusted simultaneously to reflect panel placement, ensuring material schedules remain accurate.

The result is a coordinated overview that reflects the complete roof build up rather than separate packages working in isolation. This reduces the likelihood of late-stage redesign, supports more reliable costing, and ensures technical and aesthetic considerations are addressed together.

Today’s architect must navigate evolving regulations, heightened accountability, increased scrutiny around compliance, and the growing expectation that renewable technologies are integrated seamlessly into the building fabric



Clear documentation remains fundamental to successful delivery

Embedding compliance in workflow

Compliance should not depend on manually interpreting complex tables and standards. Digital integration within the platform allows compliance checks to be embedded directly into the design process. Automated product compatibility ensures that, based on project location and roof dimensions, only suitable tiles and accessories are shown, removing the need for manual cross-referencing.

A guided workflow flags missing or inconsistent information before architects progress, helping to minimise specification stage errors.

Fixing calculations are generated automatically, taking account of building dimensions, roof pitch, tile type and site exposure. Outputs are aligned with BS EN 1991-1-4 and BS 5534, providing reassurance that wind loading and fixing requirements have been properly addressed.

Clear documentation remains fundamental to successful delivery. Generating project specific NBS (National Building Specification) clauses within the platform ensures selected tiles and accessories are accurately reflected in the written specification.

When documentation, fixing calculations and product selections are derived from the same dataset, the risk of misinterpretation is reduced and coordination across the supply chain is strengthened.

A smarter way forward

The construction industry is under pressure to build better, faster and more transparently. Roofing, as a critical part of the building envelope, must respond accordingly. By combining specification, fixing calculations, compliance assurance, documentation and solar PV configuration within a single, traceable environment, the integrated platform simplifies the process and reduces risk.

The goal is not to replace professional judgement, but to support it – cutting administrative friction and enabling architects to focus on delivering robust, coordinated roof designs.

As regulation evolves and renewable technologies become embedded in everyday projects, integration is no longer a convenience. It is the direction of travel.

Dan Redfern is head of marketing communications at Marley

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Inverted warm flat roof insulation: Closing the gap on performance

By Jim Marshall – Hot & Cold Applied Liquids Product Manager at Bauder

The inverted roof (now formally an ‘inverted warm flat roof’ following the latest BS 6229 revision) remains a versatile and proven flat-roofing solution. Its long-term durability (often matching the service life of the building) makes it a favourite for architects, specifiers and contractors.

With design flexibility supporting podium decks, landscaped terraces, heavy-duty vehicular surfaces, green roofs and rooftop solar installations, it continues to play a central role in commercial and residential developments.

Yet despite its apparent simplicity, the success of an inverted warm flat roof depends on something far less visible: the precision of its insulation design, detailing and installation. The relationship between the insulation layer and the water flow reducing layer (WFRL) is fundamental. When designed and installed correctly, the system performs as intended; when not, performance can fall short.

Why insulation quality matters more than ever

Unlike an exposed warm roof, an inverted warm flat roof places insulation above the waterproofing, protecting the membrane from thermal shock, UV exposure, foot traffic and mechanical damage. However, this exposes the insulation directly to rainwater, creating design challenges unique to inverted systems and making accurate thermal calculations critical. As regulatory pressures tighten, buildings must achieve the U values stated at design stage, with performance deliverable in real-world conditions.

This is only possible when moisture behaviour, rainwater cooling effects and installation quality are fully considered. Product choice matters, but installation technique and detailing matter just as much.

The importance of falls and drainage

Correct detailing begins at design stage. The latest revision of BS 6229 (December 2025) reinforces the need for well-designed falls and effective drainage on all flat roofs. Poorly formed falls, back falls or deck irregularities can trap water beneath the insulation. In a



Completed waterproofing before insulation

warm roof, surface water has little influence on heat loss; in an inverted system, ponding directly affects thermal performance. Accurate falls, correct drainage and a suitable substrate are therefore central to achieving the required U value.

Moisture and rainwater: the essential correction factors

Two correction factors must always be applied alongside the insulation’s declared thermal conductivity:

- **Moisture Correction Factor:** Reflects long-term moisture absorption. As moisture increases, thermal conductivity rises and insulation becomes less effective.
- **Rainwater Cooling Correction Factor:** Unique to inverted warm flat roof, this accounts for heat lost as rainwater flows beneath the insulation. The effect varies by UK rainfall zone and must be calculated using correct data.

Incorrect application of either factor means the resulting U value will not represent true performance, potentially increasing heat loss and risking non-compliance with energy and carbon targets.

Why substrate quality matters

For new builds, the deck provider’s



Insulation being installed

first task is to assess the substrate and take any corrective actions. The deck must meet tolerances for surface regularity, falls and structural stability to avoid any backfalls. Any deviation can undermine even the best specification. No insulation can compensate for a poor-quality substrate. An uneven deck leads to rocking boards, inconsistent contact, increased water movement and measurable thermal loss.

The importance of installation on performance

In addition, of course, to waterproofing, insulation installation is a critical moment in the build-up. Boards must be close-butted, tight to edges and upstands, and accurately cut around penetrations. Even small gaps create cold bridges and channels for water movement, increasing thermal loss. Design-related thermal bridges may be accounted for in modelling, but workmanship-related gaps are not.

The water flow reducing layer (WFRL)

After insulation is installed, the WFRL is laid. Despite its thin profile, it has a large influence on performance by reducing water reaching the waterproofing membrane. BS 6229:2025 requires 300 mm laps, or sealed laps where this cannot be achieved; for blue roofs, all laps and penetrations must be sealed. Poor WFRL installation can reduce performance significantly, with poor insulation installation exacerbating this reduction enough to push a compliant design into non-compliance.

Key takeaway: Precision is the path to performance

The inverted warm flat roof system is robust and durable, but its thermal performance depends on precision. Well-designed falls (i.e. with no back falls), accurate U-value calculations, high-quality insulation installation and a correctly fitted WFRL are essential. When these elements are executed with discipline, the system delivers long-term durability, genuine thermal efficiency and dependable performance throughout the building’s service life.

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Inverting perceptions on roofing design decisions

Rob Firman at Polyfoam XPS looks at new recommendations for inverted roof buildups under the revised British Standard, and reflects on how specifiers' decisions on roofing systems have ramifications through a building's life.



Having the knowledge that installation techniques for WFRLs have become more robust improves certainty

The revised code of practice BS 6229:2025 (Flat roofs with continuously supported flexible waterproof coverings) seeks to reduce the gap between how flat roofs are designed in theory, and how they perform in reality. This is to be welcomed, especially as we continue to see inverted roof specifications increase from year to year.

Before we get into detail about what the 2025 edition of BS 6229 says about inverted roofs, it is worth revisiting what happened when the 2018 version of BS 6229 introduced a controversial and confusing guidance note for inverted roofs.

An inverted roof is so called because the waterproofing layer sits below the thermal insulation layer and ballast finish. Some water is expected to penetrate the ballast and insulation layers and drain from the waterproofing layer.

To reduce the amount of water reaching the insulation layer, a water flow reducing layer (WFRL) can be added above the

insulation and below the ballast. It is not a waterproof layer, but inverted roof test results and corrections to inverted roof U-value calculations show WFRLs to be important and an effective addition.

BS 6229:2018 posited that more water reaches the waterproofing layer than is predicted in theory. It featured a note saying that the thermal insulation layer could be increased in thickness by 10% to help address additional heat loss.

The note was not a formal recommendation, and agreement on whether it should be applied or not was never reached within the flat roofing sector. For the publication of BS 6229:2025, the note has been removed – bringing any debate about its application to an end once and for all.

To try and reduce potential inverted roof performance gaps, BS 6229:2025 has dispensed with additional corrections to calculated insulation thicknesses. Instead, its focus is on practical considerations that should ensure WFRLs deliver their tested performance.

One new recommendation in particular seeks to address scenarios where a WFRL might move during the roof construction.

Above the waterproofing layer, inverted roof systems are loose laid. They rely on the weight of the ballast layer to keep the thermal insulation and WFRL in place. However, installing the system on an advancing front, there is concern that the relatively lightweight WFRL membrane could move during installation.

Manufacturers and suppliers of inverted roof kits (the name that describes the combination of thermal insulation and WFRL) require the WFRL to be laid with a 300 mm lap at the joints between separate runs of membrane.

Where a 300 mm lap cannot be achieved during installation, BS 6229:2025 recommends that joints be taped and sealed. This is not a measure to make the layer more resistant to water penetration, but to make it less likely that the WFRL moves during installation. If the membrane is more likely to remain in place, then it is more likely to deliver its intended performance.

All of the test results and correction factors used in U-value calculations for inverted roofs should therefore be more representative of the amount of water actually reaching the waterproofing layer.

Design professionals' influence

This may all sound more pertinent to contractors than design professionals. However, it is worth noting from the point of view of understanding how design and specification decisions carry through the construction and use phases of a building.

If the aim of BS 6229:2025 is to address performance gap issues, then we should not forget the role that design professionals play in influencing what happens on site.

Knowing installation techniques for WFRLs have become more robust improves certainty for everyone involved in design

and specification, while also eliminating BS 6229:2018 confusion.

It is important to understand that different WFRL membranes have different properties and characteristics. Not all membranes are the same, so engaging with inverted roof system suppliers during design and specification phases offers the opportunity to understand what qualities can best support successful installation.

A typical design life for many buildings is 60 years, with 100 or even 120 years sometimes the aim. If a better standard of WFRL installation is evidenced during construction, will that be maintained if maintenance work disrupts the membrane? If invasive work is required to inspect, maintain or repair some aspect of the roof, it is relatively easy to take up the inverted roof system. But will it be reinstated to the condition in which it was found?

Making and recording specification decisions with construction and maintenance in mind can allow the building owner/occupier to make decisions that align with the original intent.

Rob Firman is technical and specification manager at Polyfoam XPS

Not all membranes are the same; engaging with suppliers during the design and specification phases offers the opportunity to understand what qualities can best support successful installation

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Heating designs for life

Ashley Cooper at WMS Underfloor Heating explains why the provision of heating is not just a technical decision, but a design choice that shapes how a home feels.



Wellbeing and inclusivity are no longer optional extras in residential design

When we think about home heating, the conversation often centres on performance figures, efficiency and system specifications. Yet some important factors can be overlooked in the early stages of decision making.

At its best, heating works quietly in the background, creating spaces that feel comfortable and easy to move through. At its worst, it can restrict layouts, introduce hazards and undermine health and wellbeing in subtle but significant ways. Increasingly, those human impacts and how to address them are being discussed at the point of specification.

This shift is reflected in the ever-evolving regulatory requirements, in which the quality of housing is increasingly linked to physical and mental health outcomes. As a result, health, wellbeing and inclusivity are no longer optional extras in residential design; they're becoming non-negotiables.

When looking closely at those principles, how to heat the property becomes a crucial decision. This has led to more considered discussion about why underfloor heating

(UFH) is not only the ideal choice for efficiency, aesthetics and ease of operation, but also a proven technology that supports layout flexibility, air quality, accessibility and thermal comfort – fundamental elements of a genuinely healthy home.

An underrated health asset

In smaller homes, apartments and independent living settings designed to meet minimum space standards, every centimetre matters and, due to their size, traditional radiators eat into this space. This can limit furniture layouts, narrow circulation routes, and create physical obstacles, which are particularly challenging for people who rely on mobility aids or wheelchairs.

UFH removes these challenges by freeing up walls, keeping routes clear and allowing rooms to be planned around occupant needs rather than the location of the heat source. In dementia care settings, this flexibility is especially valuable as it's proven that calm, familiar and uncluttered spaces are easier to navigate and understand, helping to reduce anxiety, confusion and distress.

Air quality & indoor environments

Traditional, convective radiators heat the room by circulating warm air, a process which can encourage dust and airborne allergens to circulate within the indoor environment. Higher levels of air pollutants can worsen respiratory conditions and allergies, particularly in older or more vulnerable people.

Hydronic UFH operates on a different principle, using radiant heat to gently warm people and surfaces from the ground up rather than driving air movement around the room. With significantly lower air circulation, the spread of dust and allergens is reduced.

Good indoor air quality also supports the senses of smell and taste, both of which can be affected by even mild congestion. For many people, particularly those living with cognitive impairment, these sensory

cues play an important role in comfort, orientation and overall quality of life.

Thermal comfort & the ageing body

As we age, our bodies become less effective at regulating temperature. Changes in metabolism, circulation, medication and skin thickness all contribute to increased sensitivity, meaning that even relatively small temperature fluctuations can feel uncomfortable or unsettling.

Research from the Dementia Research Centre in London has shown that people living with certain forms of dementia are also particularly sensitive to temperature changes. Underfloor heating helps address this by creating a consistently warm environment from the ground up. Plus, the floors remain comfortably warm, eliminating the shock of stepping onto cold surfaces, while heat is evenly distributed, with no hot or cold spots.

Modern UFH systems also offer smart controls, eliminating the need for residents to manage settings themselves. In some care scenarios, this has genuine clinical value as gradually lowering temperatures later in the afternoon, for example, may help manage symptoms associated with 'sundowning'

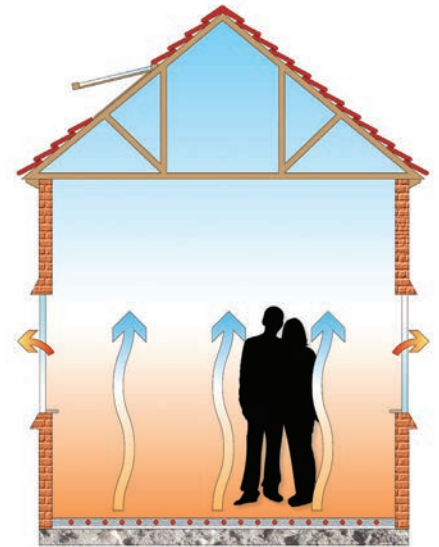
problems common in people living with Alzheimer's disease.

Supporting compliance today and tomorrow

The regulatory case is also strengthening. Part O of the Building Regulations places a clear requirement on new homes to address the risk of overheating. This challenge is often seen in urban homes, where noise, pollution and/or security concerns can make opening windows at night impractical. UFH systems connected to a reversible air-source heat pump can help address this by providing low-level cooling through the floor when conditions demand it.

From an energy perspective, UFH also helps achieve the lowest possible flow temperatures when paired with air source heat pumps, allowing the full system to operate at peak efficiency. As the industry prepares for the Future Homes Standard, this low-carbon technology pairing combination provides a practical, future ready solution that balances comfort, regulation and long-term performance.

Ashley Cooper is managing director at WMS Underfloor Heating



Modern UFH systems also offer smart controls, eliminating the need for residents to manage settings themselves

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Design, decarbonise, deliver

Richard Brown at Ideal Commercial Heating explores key pointers for specifiers looking to transition projects from gas boilers to heat pumps.



Commercial heat pump projects succeed when technical solutions are aligned with the client's objectives

The electrification of heat is now firmly embedded in the future of the UK's built environment. Yet successful deployment relies on far more than replacing one appliance (a boiler) with another (a heat pump). It demands careful design, an understanding of buildings in their entirety, and a rigorous approach to specification. The most successful projects are those where heat pumps are treated as part of a whole-building strategy rather than as a single equipment substitution.

Start with the building

Before plant selection is even considered, attention should be given to how heat demand can be reduced at source. Improvements to fabric, insulation levels

and air tightness can reduce peak heating loads by as much as 60 to 70%. This has a direct impact on the size of heat pump plant required, the capital cost of the system, and the achievable seasonal efficiency. This fabric-first mindset is reflected in industry guidance such as CIBSE AM17.

Understanding the client brief & project objectives

Commercial heat pump projects succeed when technical solutions are aligned with the client's objectives, whether the primary driver is carbon reduction, regulatory compliance, operating cost control, resilience, reputational performance or a combination of these.

Budget constraints, expectations around comfort, requirements for redundancy and resilience, and plans for future building use all influence the most appropriate system approach. The way in which the system will be operated and maintained, and how it will be handed over to facilities teams, is equally important.

These considerations often lead to more nuanced solutions than a straightforward move to fully electric heating. In many cases, hybrid systems that combine heat pumps with boilers provide a pragmatic balance between decarbonisation, cost control and operational confidence. Hybrid systems can reduce upfront capital investment, maintain resilience during peak demand, allow gradual upgrades to distribution systems, and provide reassurance to facilities teams adapting to unfamiliar technologies.

Working within regulatory & best practice frameworks

Designers and specifiers are supported by a wide range of established guidance that helps shape better outcomes, such as CIBSE AM17 for large non-domestic heat pump installations, as well as CIBSE CP1 guidance for heat networks, Building Regulations Part L, and frameworks including EPCs, SAP, and MEES.

Core system design considerations

Once objectives are established and building performance is understood, attention turns to detailed system design. Accurate load calculations and a clear understanding of the building's heat profile across the year are fundamental. Designing solely for peak conditions often leads to oversizing, which in turn reduces efficiency, increases cycling and undermines long-term performance.

Operating temperatures are another critical factor for system specification. Heat pumps deliver their best efficiencies at lower flow temperatures, which may require changes to emitters, distribution systems or control strategies, particularly in retrofit scenarios. Domestic hot water demand introduces further complexity, as it often requires higher temperatures and may influence whether additional technologies such as immersion heaters or supplementary heat sources are required.

Existing building services infrastructure cannot be ignored. Legacy pipework, radiators, controls and hydraulic arrangements impose real constraints, and assumptions that everything can remain unchanged frequently lead to compromised performance.

Refrigerant selection is becoming an increasingly important part of specification. With tightening F-Gas regulations and proposed future restrictions on higher global warming potential refrigerants, designers are under growing pressure to consider not only current compliance but also long-term regulatory risk and environmental impact.

The often-overlooked role of thermal storage

Well designed buffer vessels and thermal stores remain one of the most effective tools for improving commercial heat pump system performance as they help to reduce peak loads on heat sources, smooth daily demand fluctuations and allow heat pumps to operate more consistently.

Practical realities: acoustics, space & planning

Beyond calculations and schematics, successful projects must address the practical constraints of real sites. Acoustic performance is frequently one of the most sensitive issues, particularly in urban, residential-adjacent and mixed-use environments. Noise impact on occupants and neighbours must be considered from



the outset, with mitigation measures such as acoustic enclosures, anti-vibration solutions and intelligent control strategies designed in rather than added retrospectively.

Space planning is an equally critical consideration. External units require adequate clearances for airflow, maintenance access and safety. Roof-mounted installations introduce structural loading considerations, while ground-level plant may need to accommodate access, security and visual impact. Certain refrigerants bring additional requirements around positioning and exclusion zones, which must be factored into layout decisions at an early stage.

Towards better outcomes

Commercial heat pumps are becoming a core component of the UK's low-carbon building services landscape. However, their success depends on both the equipment and the quality of design, specification, collaboration and long-term thinking that underpins each project.

By prioritising building performance, aligning technical solutions with client objectives, applying established guidance and giving proper attention to practical installation realities, heating systems can be delivered that not only reduce carbon but also perform reliably, efficiently and economically throughout their lifecycle.

Richard Brown is head of specification at Ideal Commercial Heating

Existing building services infrastructure cannot be ignored by specifiers

ECOMOD heat pump range capacity increases

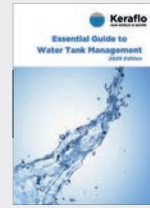


Ideal Heating Commercial has expanded the range to include a 65 kW model to meet demand for higher output systems. This takes the ECOMOD 290HT range to four chassis sizes and six available outputs, from 15 kW to 65 kW. ECOMOD 290HT monobloc air source

heat pumps have an exceptionally low global warming potential (GWP) of just three, thanks to the use of R290 natural refrigerant. The lower the GWP, the lower the contribution to climate change. As with other ECOMOD heat pumps, the ECOMOD 290HT 65 kW can be used in a hybrid heating system.

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Keraflo launch 2026 edition of essential guide



Keraflo has announced the release of the 2026 Edition of its Essential Guide to Water Tank Management. This updated edition provides an essential resource for facilities managers, building maintenance engineers and health and safety specialists navigating the complexities of cold water storage. The 2026 Edition expands on the original guide, addressing critical new challenges such as changing water regulations, heightened scrutiny on water conservation, and the latest advancements in tank management technology.

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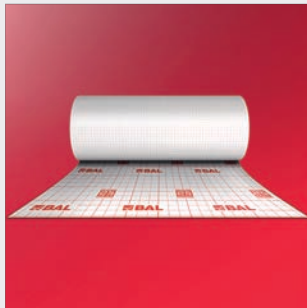


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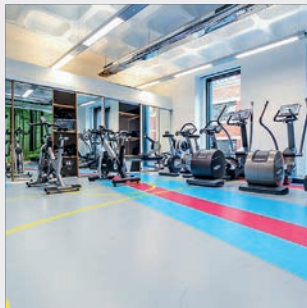


BAL is pleased to introduce our improved BAL Rapid-Mat thin uncoupling mat – now in white. This latest development provides the same trusted performance installers rely on for tiling onto problematic substrates with movement, with additional improvements to make every installation smoother and more efficient. The move to a white mat – with red gridlines and markings - provides enhanced visibility for setting out plus easier to see wetting out of the adhesive, helping installers easily confirm full coverage during installation.

Add to this the improved roll-out and mat stability, and you've got a system designed to speed up workflow without compromising reliability. And the benefits don't stop there: the updated mat colour also delivers a 2.5% CO₂ reduction in the production of the non-woven fleece – a small change that supports our ongoing sustainability efforts. BAL Rapid-Mat: a fresh new look, with all the performance you expect.

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Elevating performance and safety: The advanced role of sports flooring beyond standard vinyl



By Jon Burnitt – national sales manager sports & education for Gerflor GBI Ltd: The quality of an indoor sports sheet vinyl floor can give specifiers a sporting advantage, with a key function of sports flooring being to help protect players from injury and enhance their athletic performance. A sports floor surface is arguably the most important element of a sporting facility to its players, and to those who design, build and manage indoor sports premises, the need for a high quality and sustainable sports flooring that consistently delivers the comfort, safety and performance aspects that are so crucial to everyone taking part in sport. The fundamental importance of the role of indoor sports floorings to environments like clubs, gyms, sports halls and leisure centres can therefore not be underestimated, regardless of whether they are low-impact or elite performance sports locations. This also extends to educational establishments where long-term injuries to the bones, joints and ligaments of athletes could cut short a potential sporting career. When it comes to reducing the risk of injury, minimising the severity of an injury should it occur, the choice of sports flooring is critical.

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Designing for every generation: How KEUCO's CARE collection is shaping inclusive bathroom design



As multigenerational living becomes increasingly common, the bathroom has emerged as one of the most important spaces in the home. Rising housing costs, less affordable housing, and the high cost of care homes means families are now living together for longer, which has led interior designers and architects alike to rethink the use and layout of the bathroom from stylish and functional to a long-term investment in comfort, safety, and independence. The central challenge is clear: how can designers create bathrooms that support all ages and abilities without compromising on style?

KEUCO's CARE collections, including PLAN CARE and AXESS by PORSCHE DESIGN, offer a new perspective on accessible bathroom design. These ranges blend ergonomic intelligence with refined aesthetics, proving that future-proofing can be both discreet and beautiful. Designed for both private homes and project environments, KEUCO AXESS by Studio F. A. Porsche is a sustainable, cross-generational concept crafted from high-quality materials with a timeless design language. While supporting those with reduced mobility or specific care needs, it delivers comfort-enhancing features that benefit users of all ages – such as the added ease of seated showering.

PLAN CARE is built around a simple yet powerful principle: accessibility should feel natural, not clinical. It achieves this by

stepping away from the institutional look traditionally associated with care products, KEUCO has created a collection that integrates seamlessly into contemporary interiors. Clean lines, elegant proportions, and finishes that include a glossy chrome or matt aluminium allow PLAN CARE elements to sit comfortably alongside premium furniture, lighting, and fittings.

This shift reflects changing attitudes towards a long-term lifestyle. Families want bathrooms that feel both inviting and personal, that don't date and yet provide reassurance and support. PLAN CARE enables designers to achieve this balance, combining strong visual identity with robust engineering. Precision-engineered grab rails and handrails are tested to support up to 115 kg, while multifunctional corner rail systems can serve as grab rails, shower bars, and secure mounts for folding seats. A hookable folding shower seat, that can be hidden away after use or a bathroom stool, both offer flexibility and comfort for seated use, yet enable a bathroom to maintain a clutter free, minimalist aesthetic.

Thoughtful details further enhance usability such as detachable soap holders on angled grab rails, they are easy to reach, while extended-handle accessories such as toilet brush sets improve accessibility and dignity in everyday tasks. These are not afterthoughts or add-ons; they are integrated design tools that allow designers to anticipate

needs rather than react to them later.

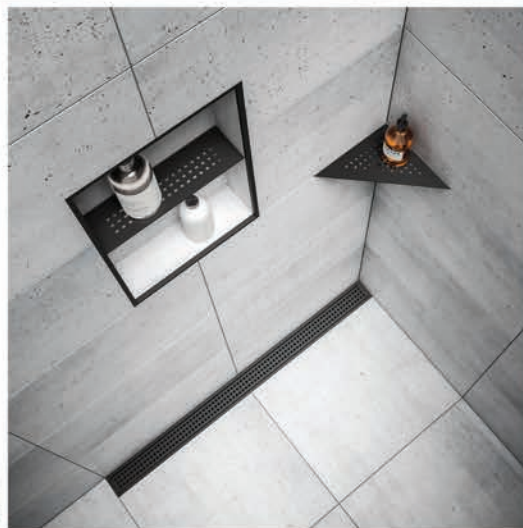
One of the greatest challenges in multigenerational design is balancing long-term functionality with present-day style. PLAN CARE addresses this by offering products that feel at home in any setting, from contemporary apartments to traditional family homes. By incorporating accessibility from the outset, designers can protect the integrity of the scheme while ensuring the bathroom remains safe and usable as needs evolve. The result is peace of mind for clients and creative freedom for designers.

Inclusive design goes beyond mobility – it is about dignity, independence, and emotional comfort. With warm, tactile materials, unobtrusive forms, and intuitive placement, KEUCO's CARE collections support natural movement and create bathrooms that feel welcoming rather than medical. The outcome is a space that works beautifully for children, adults, and older generations alike, without signalling that it was designed for any one group.

As lifestyles continue to change, the most successful interiors will be those that embrace flexibility, inclusivity, and longevity. KEUCO's CARE collections demonstrate that accessible bathroom design can be elegant, intelligent, and enduring.

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Group-fed shower systems with built-in efficiency

Horne's range of push-button timed flow control (TFC) shower panels provides a simple but robust pre-plumbed solution for group-fed installations – using pre-mixed warm water from a single upstream thermostatic mixing valve (TMV).

Like the Dušo Sport column, these panels are designed to simplify installation and improve project certainty. Pre-assembled and pressure-tested offsite, they reduce on-site pipework, fittings/connections and wall penetrations – allowing faster more predictable installation across sports, leisure, education and selected custodial environments.

In operation, TFC panels are supplied with pre-mixed warm water from a suitably sized upstream TMV, such as the Horne 15 or Horne 20. In practice, these group-fed arrangements are most effective where a small number of adjacent or back-to-back shower panels can be served from a common valve. This helps limit mixed-water deadlegs, supports good water hygiene practice and enables efficient

use of valve capacity. A valve sizing tool is available at <https://b.link/SizeMatters> – supporting architectural technologists and MEP designers in selecting optimal capacity TMVs and shower groupings.

Each panel incorporates a mechanical push-button timed flow control, delivering water for a pre-set duration (adjustable up to 45 seconds), alongside an integral flow regulator. Together, these features help minimise water and energy consumption by controlling both flow duration and rate, reducing unnecessary discharge of pre-heated water.

Outlet configurations include fixed vandal-resistant (VR) shower heads for robust, low-maintenance installations. For more demanding settings, fully ligature-resistant variants are available, combining a VR head with a protective shroud over the push-button control, cover panel over top entry supply pipe or rear entry pipe connection.

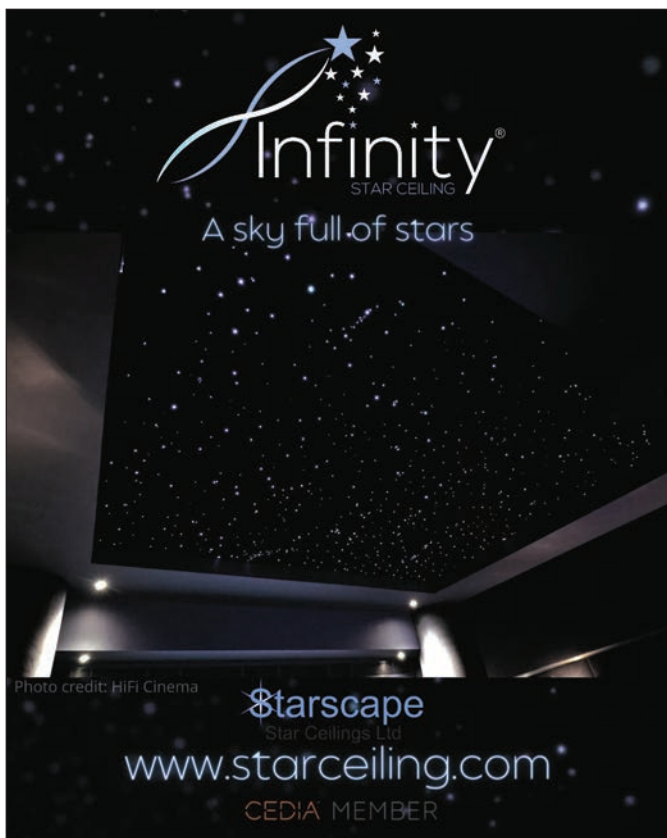
Riser rail, hose and handset arrangements are also available, with rail options in



white/grey or orange/grey finishes – the latter offering enhanced visual contrast where required.

Durable construction, easy installation, reduced maintenance and low-cost spare parts support long service life and strong whole-life value. Product data is available on NBS Source, supporting straightforward specification across various platforms: <https://nbs.fyi/gqCQ0S>

01505 321455 www.horne.co.uk



Embrace the evolution of Japandi with Keller



Keller Kitchens has unveiled Silent River, a serene new kitchen design that reflects the growing appetite for Japandi-inspired interiors. Silent River brings together minimalist design and natural warmth through Keller's versatile palette of finishes. Silent River champions the use of matt finishes and worktops inspired by natural stone, enhanced by gentle curves and rounded forms that soften the overall composition. Open shelving, warm-toned lighting, and thoughtfully placed biophilic elements – such as indoor planting or access to natural daylight – add an airy, uplifting quality to the space.

www.kellerkitchens.com

Altro delivers 'home from home' feel



A package of products from Altro has helped deliver a high-performance 'home from home' refurb at a dementia-care home. Altro has been at the forefront of dementia-friendly design. Vickie Nickolls, designer at Interior Therapy, selected a package of products from Altro to use in the project, including

Altro Wood Comfort acoustic slip resistant flooring in hallways and bedrooms, Altro Wood adhesive-free in the lounge and dining areas and Altro Pisces specialist safety flooring in ensuites, coupled with Altro Tegulis tile effect wall panels for a seamless finish.

enquiries@altro.com

www.altro.com/uk/sectors/health-and-care/care-homes



10-year warranty



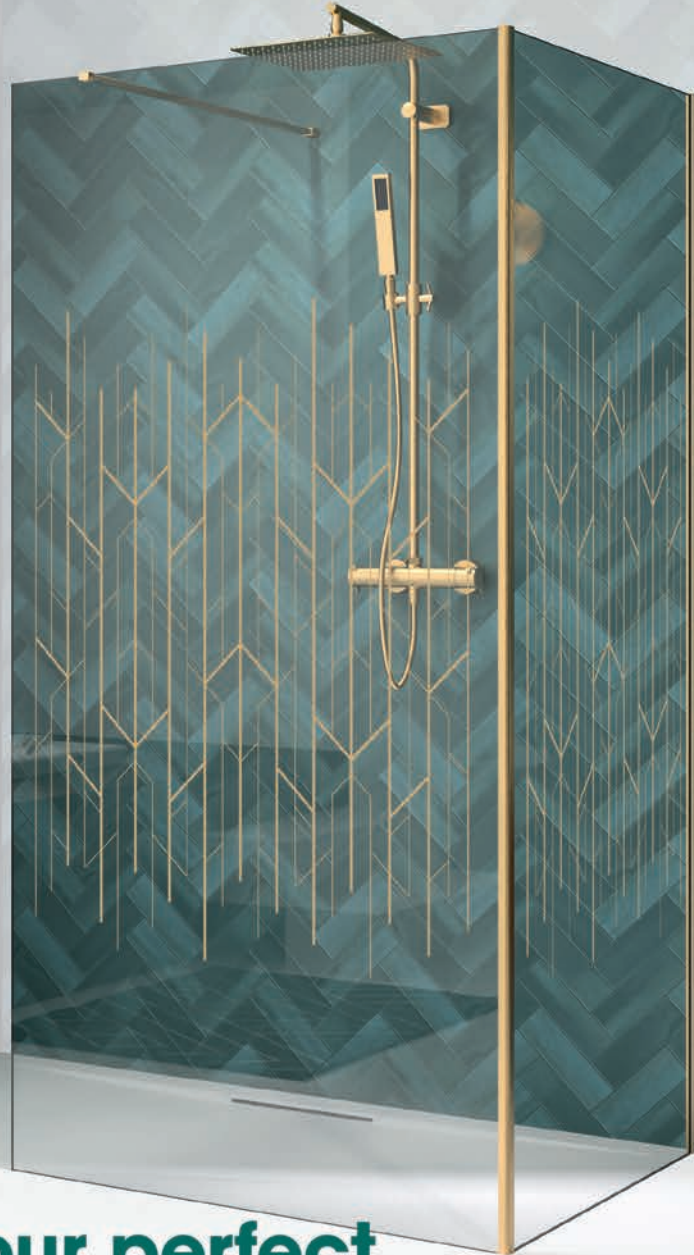
Easy maintenance



Ease of installation



Height 2000mm



Anti-limescale



Easy access



Left or right installation



6mm glass

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Cafe Portrait, National Galleries Scotland: Portrait

The National Galleries Scotland: Portrait in Edinburgh, a grand, neo-gothic listed building, offers visitors a journey through the country's past and present with a remarkable collection of paintings, sculptures, photography, and film. The cafe, managed by Heritage Portfolio is a popular destination for visitors, set in a light and spacious area.

Space Solutions led the design and refurbishment of the café, to modernise the space while preserving the historic character of the building. The aim was also to create an improved user experience in a multi-purpose space that could easily host casual day-time visitors, serve as a destination for small groups and meetings, and transform at night to host larger gatherings and events.

The open-plan cafe had ongoing noise issues that needed to be addressed, requiring innovative solutions to control sound without compromising aesthetic. As a listed building, securing a ceiling solution

directly to the soffit was not permitted. The challenge was to create a modern, visually appealing environment that harmonised with the building's heritage while enhancing acoustic performance.

Solution

Space Solutions designed three art installations in the existing lighting tracks that could also function as acoustic rafts. Featuring multi-coloured panels at different angles, these rafts not only address acoustic challenges but also complement the Gothic architecture.

The acoustic rafts were made up of three Zentia Sonify Tilt canopy rafts, delivering on both aesthetic and functional requirements. The Sonify rafts are rated Class A in sound absorption and were chosen for their ability to control reverberation and noise levels in the cafe's open-plan layout. The rafts were specified in a mixture of YE3 (pale yellow), RE5 (soft red), and WH1 (white).



To comply with the building's listed status, a primary Unistrut structure was used to suspend the grid system sufficiently, ensuring that no alterations were made to the soffit.

The installation, carried out by 2T Joiners Ltd, was completed in January 2025. The Sonify Tilt canopy rafts have improved the acoustic quality of the space while maintaining the design's artistic integrity. The rafts provide better sound management, ensuring a more pleasant experience for the cafe's customers.

This project exemplifies how thoughtful design and modern solutions can transform a historic space without compromising its original charm.

0191 497 1000 www.zentia.com/en-gb

Forbo's refreshed Eternal De Luxe range

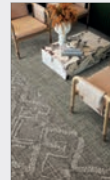


Forbo Flooring Systems has updated its trusted Eternal de Luxe brand of sheet vinyl, with a focus on delivering effective impact sound reduction, an updated colour palette and more realistic visuals. The Eternal de Luxe collection sets a new standard in design, quality and sustainability, with over 50% natural raw materials, a recycled

content of 18% and adhesive free installation up to 40 m². Forbo has refreshed this collection, streamlining the existing offering to reflect modern interior choices, as well as the addition of 11 brand new colourways. There is an increased emphasis on warmer tones.

01773 744 121 www.forbo-flooring.co.uk/eternaldeluxe

Interface explores textile art aesthetics



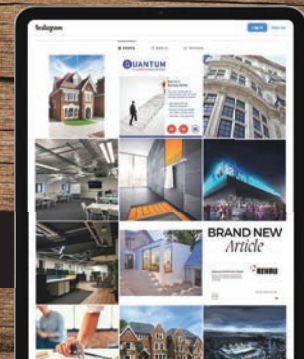
Interface Inc. has launched its new textile art-inspired carpet tile collection, Crafted Connections™. Featuring rich textures and subtle patterns, the collection brings warmth and character to today's commercial spaces. From traditional textures to bouclé and batik styles, woven aesthetics continue to gain favour across commercial environments. Crafted Connections offers three styles illustrating each of these visuals

in one coordinated collection: Thread Lightly, Bound to Last, and Dual Effect. Each provides endless possibilities for layered design, with easy zoning and wayfinding across the coordinating styles.

0800 313 4465 interface.com/craftedconnections

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Access to the right options

Graham Mears at Stannah Lifts explains the different types of lift solutions designed for improving accessibility, and advises on the best options for a variety of scenarios.



Passenger lifts are the most common type of lift found in residential and commercial buildings, designed to handle frequent use while transporting people safely between floors. They operate under the Lifts Regulations 2016, which require a minimum travel speed of more than 0.15 m/s, and an average travel time of 18 seconds between floors.

These types of lifts are most suitable for new buildings, where constructing a lift shaft and pit can be planned from the outset, or in existing buildings that already have a shaft in place.

While passenger lifts are the preferred solution for most buildings, platform lifts offer a viable alternative in buildings and

residential settings with lower foot traffic or where there is limited shaft space, pit depth or headroom. Platform lifts are designed to carry up to five passengers and typically operate at speeds below 0.15 metres per second, with a maximum travel height of 12 metres. Regulated under the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 2008, platform lifts are particularly suited for people with reduced mobility, wheelchair users or those with pushchairs, offering a practical and accessible solution where a full passenger lift is not feasible.

Machinery directive lifts (e.g. platform lifts) are efficient for everyday use, but they are not intended for emergencies. In the event of a fire, passenger lifts are programmed to automatically return to the main evacuation floor, open their doors and shut down, ensuring no one gets trapped inside. This safety feature aligns with BS EN 81-73:2020, which outlines safety protocols for lift operation during the event of a fire.

Enhancing safety with evacuation lifts

Evacuation lifts are a type of passenger lift. They are specifically designed with enhanced control and safety features. Their primary purpose is to provide a safe means of escape for passengers, particularly those who may need assistance.

These lifts include dedicated emergency power supplies to keep them operational during power outages. Planning for evacuation lifts must be incorporated into the building's overall design at an early stage, so it's definitely worth involving your chosen lift provider because of the additional lift design elements, and building elements, such as ensuring they are protected, fire-safe waiting areas on each landing.

In an emergency, these lifts switch to a dedicated emergency mode and are controlled by trained building staff, a designated operator, or the fire and rescue service. While their capacity starts from an eight person lift, larger models of 21

Planning for evacuation lifts must be incorporated into the building's overall design

persons are often used in hospitals to accommodate stretchers and equipment.

Understanding firefighting lifts

Firefighting lifts are a critical requirement in buildings where floors are more than 18 metres above, or more than 10 metres below, the point of fire service access. These lifts are purpose-built to help fire and rescue teams reach fire affected areas quickly and safely during an emergency.

While they are similar to evacuation lifts, firefighting lifts include additional safety features tailored for use by emergency services. These can include integrated connections to fire detection systems, in-shaft ladders, rescue trap doors and communication systems that continue operating during a fire.

They must be powered by an independent emergency power supply and are typically designed to carry between eight and 13 people, though larger capacities may be specified depending on the building's layout and fire strategy.

Retrofitting lifts for evacuation or firefighting use in existing buildings, especially older high-rise buildings, can be a complex challenge. Whether an upgrade is

feasible depends on several key factors, such as the building's ability to accommodate fire-resistant waiting areas, dedicated emergency power supplies and protected lift shafts. In many cases, a full site inspection is essential to determine how the building can be adapted to meet the strict safety standards required for compliant lift upgrades.

Improving accessibility and safety

When selecting a passenger or platform lift, both design and accessibility should be carefully considered. Controls should be installed at accessible heights and may include braille and tactile buttons to support visually impaired users. All lifts must be equipped with two-way emergency communication in case passengers become trapped. Standard systems typically include an emergency call button, speaker and microphone.

Collaborating with a qualified lift specialist during the planning and installation phases is essential to ensure the lift meets regulations and standards.

Graham Mears is general manager at Stannah Lifts



MxPro 5 delivers reliable fire protection for Royal Marine hotel

The Royal Marine Hotel, County Dublin, has completed a significant upgrade of its fire alarm system with the installation of Advanced's MxPro 5 fire panels.

The hotel comprises guest accommodation, bar and restaurant areas, a pool and spa, underground car park, kitchens and plant rooms. Its previous fire alarm system was removed as it was no longer meeting the operational needs of the site, with ongoing reliability issues and false alarms causing disruption for guests and staff. A modern, networked solution was required to improve performance and provide greater control.

TEE Fire Safety Solutions were appointed to carry out the upgrade. As the system was networked, all five panels had to be replaced on the same day to maintain continuity and minimise disruption. The new installation is based on Advanced's MxPro 5 analogue addressable fire panels, providing a robust and scalable platform well suited to the



demands of a live hospitality environment.

The system includes a combination of eight-loop, four-loop and two-loop MxPro 5 panels, supported by a fully functional repeater panel. All panels are networked using standard network cards and configured across seven network nodes, with a total of 1,813 devices programmed throughout the site.

Reducing false alarms was a key objective of the project. Using the MxPro 5's advanced configuration capabilities, TEE Fire Safety Solutions implemented a tailored false alarm management strategy, including verification and hold times designed specifically for hotel operations. Heat detectors, manual call points and linear detection were excluded from false alarm management to ensure full responsiveness to genuine alarms.

A staged alarm strategy has also been programmed, allowing reception, management and maintenance sounders to activate initially before escalating to a full evacuation if the alarm is not cancelled by trained staff.

The installation also provides a future-proof platform, with plans already in place to add an additional single-loop panel to support a forthcoming extension.

0345 894 7000
www.advancedco.com

AIM doubles fire stop block capacity

Investment in additional CNC technology at its Crawley manufacturing facility has increased AIM Acoustic & Insulation Manufacturing's Fire Stop Block production capacity by 50 per cent. "This significantly greater CNC capability supports AIM's position as a Fire Stop Block category leader," says commercial director Ian Exall. "Earlier spend on further testing means we have one of the most comprehensive ranges of fire tested FSBs in the market."

Used to maintain fire compartment lines and act as a barrier to the movement of smoke in floors, walls, partitions and roofs, FSBs are also known as Trapezoidal Fire Stops.

Typically, a Fire Stop Block is installed at the junction of a metal deck concrete floor and a wall that has a fire resistance requirement. The Fire Stop Block is used to fill the space under the floor where it is located on the wall. They also contribute to acoustic performance.

AIM uses CNC technology to produce precision, compression fit Fire Stop Blocks with 60- and 120-minute insulation and integrity options. Blocks cut from an ablative batt are also available and are typically used where fibre migration from the blocks (or other items in the



vicinity of the wall) has to be eliminated, such as in the construction of hi-tech buildings, for example data centres.

The acquisition of new plant and a major refurbishment of existing capacity follow AIM's 2024 investment in additional test evidence to cover a wider range of applications. Tested to the principles of BS EN 1366-4:2021, AIM's Fire Stop Blocks achieved IFC Certification Ltd third-party certification.

AIM's Fire Stop Blocks are available in CNC cut standard profiles to suit major metal deck producer profiles or are cut to customer specifications. The latest CNC technology ensures

accuracy even for more challenging profiles with rounded shoulders. Compression fit means sealants are not required for most applications.

"We manufacture Fire Stop Blocks to pretty much any profile, or customer defined dimensions. Indeed, we often get the proverbial "back of an envelope" drawing from which to create the CAD files required for production of the finished item" adds Ian Exall.

AIM's Fire Stop Block technical datasheet explains the application scope and test evidence.

01293 582400

aimlimited.co.uk/solutions/fire-stop-blocks-2

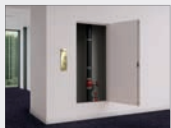
Genius solution!



C-TEC has launched FastConvert, an innovative new four to eight-way conventional to addressable zone converter. Designed to facilitate the fast conversion and upgrade of a multi-zone conventional fire system to an addressable CAST system utilising pre-existing wiring, FastConvert can save fire alarm installers thousands of pounds. Fully compatible with C-TEC's XFP and ZFP CAST fire systems and its award-winning CAST-PRO combined fire detection and alarm devices. Andy Green, C-TEC's marketing director said: "As fire detection and alarm technology has improved, more and more sites are looking to upgrade their old conventional systems to addressable, not just because the conventional devices are reaching end of life, but also because an addressable system can identify the precise location of a fire or fault, facilitate sophisticated cause and effects and reduce false alarms. We are definitely seeing this in schools, care homes and hotels where FastConvert is coming into its own as an ingenious retrofit upgrade solution which can utilise a conventional system's existing zone wiring whilst maintaining compliance with BS 5839-1."

01942 366328 www.c-tec.com

Robust UK introduces fire-rated riser door



Robust UK has launched its first ever RISER-DOR for concealing service units, introducing a bespoke fire-rated riser door solution. This 120-minute fire-rated custom-built access panel provides discreet and convenient access to electrical wiring, plumbing and HVAC systems

within vertical shafts, without detracting from interior aesthetics. The RISER-DOR enables technicians to carry out inspections, maintenance and repairs on concealed services efficiently. RISER-DOR is among the few fire-rated riser door solutions available, giving customers more choice in building compliant access systems.

01782 592900 www.robust-uk.com

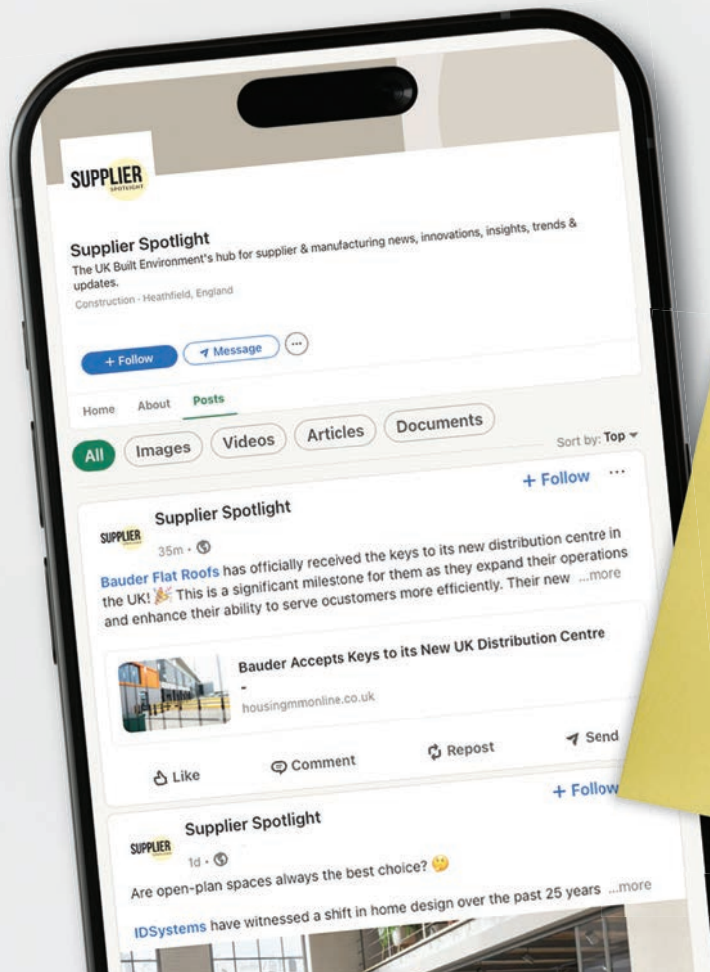
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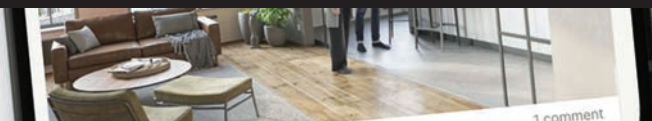
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Shown in Red

SENATOR

Shown in Autumn

V2

Shown in Autumn

