

# PANEL, WOOD & *Solid Surface*

*Issue No. 213/214*

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## **SCM Open House 2026:** integrated solutions & world premieres

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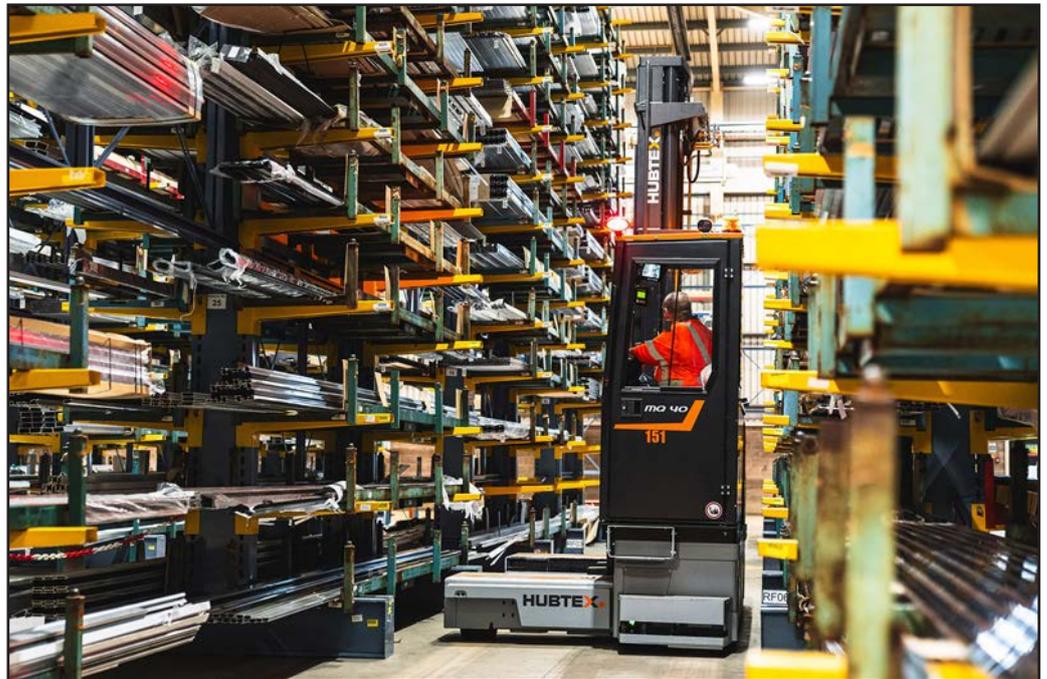
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# Collision risk in narrow aisles: HUBTEX introduces Clear Aisle Assist

IN NARROW-AISLE warehouses, multidirectional forklifts often operate with minimal safety distances. Collisions with protruding loads pose a constant safety risk. To effectively minimise this risk, HUBTEX has developed a patented Clear Aisle Assist: A system of laser sensors that identifies protruding loads early, alerts the driver, and automatically reduces speed.

## Challenges in narrow aisles: minimal clearance, limited visibility

HUBTEX multidirectional side-loaders are frequently utilised in narrow-aisle warehouses. To maximise storage capacity, these vehicles operate within guidance systems with very limited safety clearance, often with less than 100 millimetres on each side. This increases space efficiency but restricts the driver's visibility. It becomes particularly critical when long items are stored at an angle or when neighbouring loads are inadvertently moved during retrieval. Parts may protrude into the aisle and aren't always visible in time from the cabin, especially on the engine side. This can lead to contact issues and costly damage to the chassis, battery, cabin or rack system. In the timber, metal and general industrial trade, with hundreds of moves per day, this scenario is commonplace.



## Patented solution: monitoring with laser-based sensors

To reduce these risks, HUBTEX has developed Clear Aisle Assist that oversees the vertical danger zones along the rack systems and reacts automatically if needed. The system utilises Lidar sensors to assess vertical planes in the vehicle's environment. Sensors are mounted at suitable positions based on vehicle configuration and scan both forwards and in re-

verse. This ensures early detection of protruding loads, whether the forklift enters the aisle forwards or backwards. The monitored area dynamically adjusts to key parameters, with speed, lift height and configuration determining the size of the protective zones. This allows for precise, needs-based detection of potential collision zones without burdening the driver with additional tasks.

Classification: The Clear Aisle Assist does not replace personal protection technology but sup-

plements it with collision protection for loads protruding from the rack system.

## Now available for the PHOENIX series

If the system detects an obstacle, it issues a warning first. If necessary, the system automatically reduces speed to avoid contact or minimise its consequences. The goal is an assistance system that effectively enhances the driver's focus and maintains material flow in tight layouts. "Our aim was to develop an assistance system that actively supports the driver without adding extra burden", states Michael Röbig, head of product management at HUBTEX. "The Clear Aisle Assist recognises dangerous situations early and can, if needed, not only warn but also automatically reduce the vehicle's speed". The system is now available for the PHOENIX series and complements existing personnel protection scanners by providing protection against goods protruding into the aisle.

HUBTEX will provide details about the Clear Aisle Assist at the upcoming LogiMAT trade show in Hall 10, Stand 10C31, taking place on 24-26 March, 2026 in Stuttgart, Germany.

**HUBTEX**  
[www.hubtex.co.uk](http://www.hubtex.co.uk)



# stabau presents telescopic cardboard clamp with patented hydraulic technology

stabau GmbH will be exhibiting at LogiMAT in Stuttgart from 24 to 26 March 2026 in Hall 10, Stand 10C31. The focus of the trade fair presentation will be on the telescopic carton clamp (KKT) — an innovative solution for the safe and efficient handling of sensitive, boxed goods.

The KKT from stabau was specially developed for transporting sensitive goods such as household appliances, electronics and packaged food. Its key feature is the patented hydraulic technology based on synchronous cylinders. This enables precise, synchronous telescopic extension of the gripper arms without the need for time-consuming adjustments, additional throttle valves or complex hose systems.

By dispensing with throttling valve technology, not only is the working speed increased, but the installation and maintenance costs are also significantly reduced. At the same time, the forced synchronisation of the arm movement ensures a high degree of operational safety and minimises errors due to incorrect control regardless of the forklift model used.

"With the telescopic carton clamp, we offer our customers a solution that consistently combines efficiency, safety and user friendliness," explains Stephan Pantelmann, sales manager Germany at stabau. "The patented hydraulics noticeably



simplify the technology and at the same time ensure a smooth, material-friendly working process, a clear advantage in daily use."

The KKT's even contact pressure and high precision of movement play a key role in preventing transport damage and reliably supporting processes with high handling volumes. This makes the attachment particularly suitable for industries with high quality requirements and sensitive goods structures.

Furthermore, with the KKT, stabau underlines its commitment to sustainable and future oriented product development. The company has been certified according to DIN EN ISO 14001:2015 since

2024 and focuses on resource saving processes and durable, low-maintenance designs.

At LogiMAT 2026, visitors will have the opportunity to find out more about the telescopic car-

ton clamp and other attachment solutions from stabau in person at stand 10C31 in hall 10 and to talk to the experts on site.

**stabau**  
[www.stabau.com/en-gb](http://www.stabau.com/en-gb)

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# SCM Open House 2026: integrated solutions and world premieres

**DRIVING the future of woodworking through the integration of advanced technologies, proactive services and digital innovation: this is the goal of the upcoming SCM Open House, scheduled for 12–14 March 2026 at SCM Headquarters in Rimini.**

Across more than 4,000 square metres, visitors will be able to explore a wide range of machines, automated systems, software and services designed to support the production of every component of the home — from furniture to timber construction, from surface treatment to flooring, from wooden windows and doors to wood/aluminium solutions.

A series of innovations will immerse attendees in a new era of woodworking innovation, where competitive advantage is no longer defined solely by a single machine or system, but by the ability to integrate them into connected, flexible and sustainable production models.

Fully embracing this vision, SCM reaffirms its role as a strategic partner for companies aiming for global competitiveness in a rapidly evolving industry characterised by new materials, faster production cycles and increasing customisation.

The Open House will feature a



rich programme of live technical demonstrations, guided tours of SCM's Rimini production plants, live links with other Italian facilities, and dedicated insights into the latest technological and market trends.

In addition to an expanded range of SCM products and services, particular interest will also be drawn by strategic partnerships with the Group's newest companies: Tecno Logica, focused

on integrated systems and robotics, and Mecal Machinery, specialists in aluminium, PVC and light-alloy processing.

## Digital systems and services

The event will put the spotlight on an Integrated Service Ecosystem designed to provide companies with more efficient production, greater operational control, and continuous manufacturing uptime, thanks to technologies that

transform machine generated data into actionable support.

At the core of this modular architecture is WinMES, SCM's Manufacturing Execution System engineered in partnership with Tecnest, a key player in production planning and supply chain management software. WinMES is considered the true digital brain of the factory. By integrating and interpreting real-time data, it optimises production flows, speeds up operational decision-making, and enhances overall plant reliability.

Factory intelligence is further strengthened by Smart Spindle, the advanced spindle-sensor system that enables predictive analysis and helps prevent unplanned machine downtime.

To safeguard the entire ecosystem, SCM incorporates advanced cybersecurity solutions, ensuring protection for data, processes, and infrastructure.

Starting in 2026, all new SCM machines will come equipped with Additional Care, a programme that provides comprehensive protection through extended warranty on spare parts and technical support, along with a three-year maintenance plan.

The result: a more stable, secure, and performance-driven production environment, ready to meet the company's goals.





### Automation and integrated machining cells

At Rimini Headquarters an Integrated Sizing and Nesting Cell for Batch 1 production will be presented. Combining advanced automation, operational flexibility and reduced energy consumption, the cell is composed of:

- flexstore hp, the automatic storage system managing all panel formats, retrieving offcuts and organising sorting in advance to support the cell's logistics even during unmanned shifts for maximum efficiency and customised stock management.
- gabbiani gt 2 single-blade panel saw, fed by the automatic storage system and an anthropomorphic robot, performing single or book cuts with high productivity. Thanks to the Maestro Stackwise software, it optimises panel arrangement, reducing waste and increasing yield.
- morbidelli x200 nesting CNC machining centre with integrated robot for automatic off-loading into organised stacks and temporary parking, ensuring gentle, non-sliding handling and maximum flexibility from loading to the finished piece.

Also on display will be stefani cell E, a compact and automated entry-level solution for Batch 1 production. It transforms the edgeworking of squared panels into an efficient and high-quality process. Ideal for small and medium sized enterprises aiming for high production performance.

The Open House will also feature a dedicated focus on Tecno Logica solutions. As a key company within the Group, Tecno Logica is a benchmark in the field of integrated systems and robo-

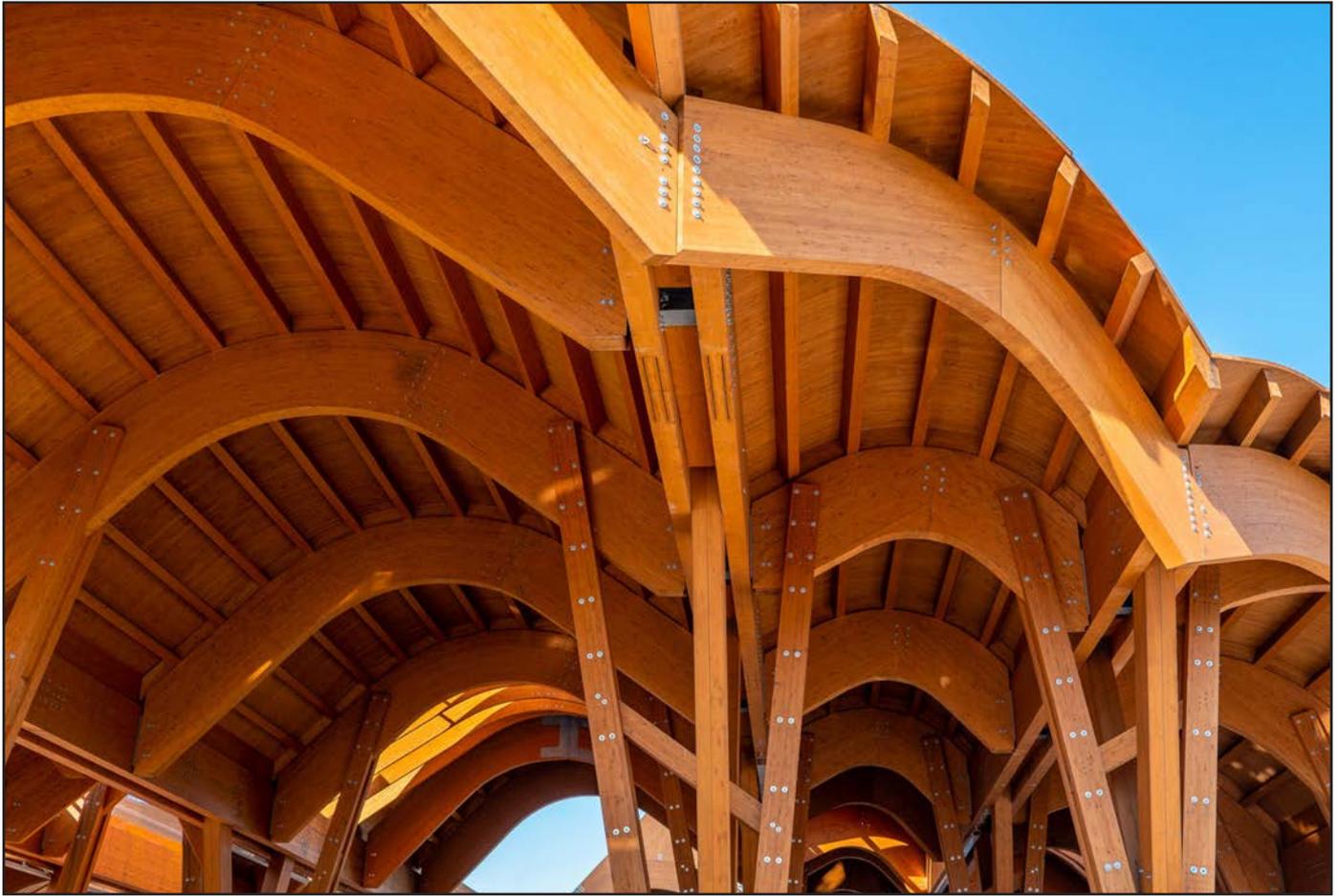
tics, offering technologies engineered to support extremely high production capacities — even in highly diversified and complex scenarios. Its range of systems is applied across multiple sectors, from woodworking to automotive, and broader industrial applications.

### New CNC machining centres

For the accord range, designed for processing both solid wood and panels, two new models will be unveiled:

- accord 400 with the new “flexmatic pro” worktable featuring automatic positioning of pods and clamps, it is available in pre-set configurations depending on the application to provide a solution that best suits the customer's requirements.
- accord 500 edge which stands out from the rest of the range thanks





to the H80C "Compact" edgebanding technology, which allows operations with various types of edges and glues and enables the automatic change of edge application type.

Also on display: the morbidelli x50 nesting centre equipped with lifter integration, a solution that ensures safe and rapid handling of any laminate and chipboard panel.

### Panel processing

In a world preview at the Villa Verucchio production plant the new gabbiani af beam saw will be on show.

The range introduces several key innovations: unrivalled production times thanks to new rapid work cycles, advanced motorisation systems, an innovative saw blade carriage with power up to 27 kW, and operational units optimized to reduce energy consumption while maintaining high-precision cutting results. Other strengths of the gabbiani af range include simplified machine maintenance and maximum operator safety.

In edgebanding, flexibility will be the keyword across the show-cased solutions such as stefani m, new edgebander equipped with servo-assisted operating units that ensure precision and ease of use. The "Multiedge" system enables extremely fast, error-free changeovers with a single click.

State-of-the-art edge-gluing technologies further expand finishing possibilities for small and medium-sized manufacturers.

Also in evidence: celaschi p20, new automatic double-end tenoner, the most compact in the range. Together with celaschi p30, it stands out for high productivity and precision, ideal for small and medium-sized enterprises producing wooden panels and alternative materials for construction, insulation, industry, doors and solid wood components. Whether used as a stand-alone machine or integrated into a production line, it ensures maximum application flexibility. Intuitive and comprehensive process control is provided by the Maestro active square HMI software.





### Windows and doors and solid wood processing

For the first time the window and door angular machining centre will feature the new "Optima BR" drilling-routing unit, which allows the carrying out of all complementary machining, including horizontal milling, and the innovative Maestro active window software interface.

Also in the spotlight is the automatic throughfeed moulder equipped with the new electronic control including the "eye-S" console fitted with 10" colour touch-screen display and the Maestro active four-side software, for the machining of profiles for windows, doors, stairs, beads, frames and furnishings.

### Timber construction

SCM will present — in an immersive digital experience — the new area gl, five-axis CNC machining centre, engineered to ensure high performance, precision and reliability in the machining of straight and curved glulam elements intended for public building roofs, multi-storey buildings and infrastructure projects.

Key features include a work area up to 5 x 50 metres and the possibility to perform pendulum machining thanks to exclusive mobile fences. Programming and control are managed through the innovative CAM Maestro lab beam&wall and SCM's Maestro active HMI.

### Finishing solutions

The focus of the area dedicated to surface finishing will be the matt effect, a continuously growing trend in the furniture world. Superfici will unveil Supermatt, a new physical matting system capable of achieving ultra-low-gloss finishes with a velvety tactile effect and

outstanding durability. Simple, high-performing, and accessible, the new system ensures reduced operating costs and easy integration even into existing lines, with a limited investment.

Physical matting becomes straightforward and expands the aesthetic possibilities of coated surfaces, increasing production flexibility.

The system is fully compatible with roller, curtain coater, or spray applications.

### Joinery machines

Visitors will explore nova si 4, the most versatile circular saw in its category according to the company, featuring a new highly reliable sliding carriage — guaranteed for 10 years — and extensive customisation possibilities according to specific application needs.

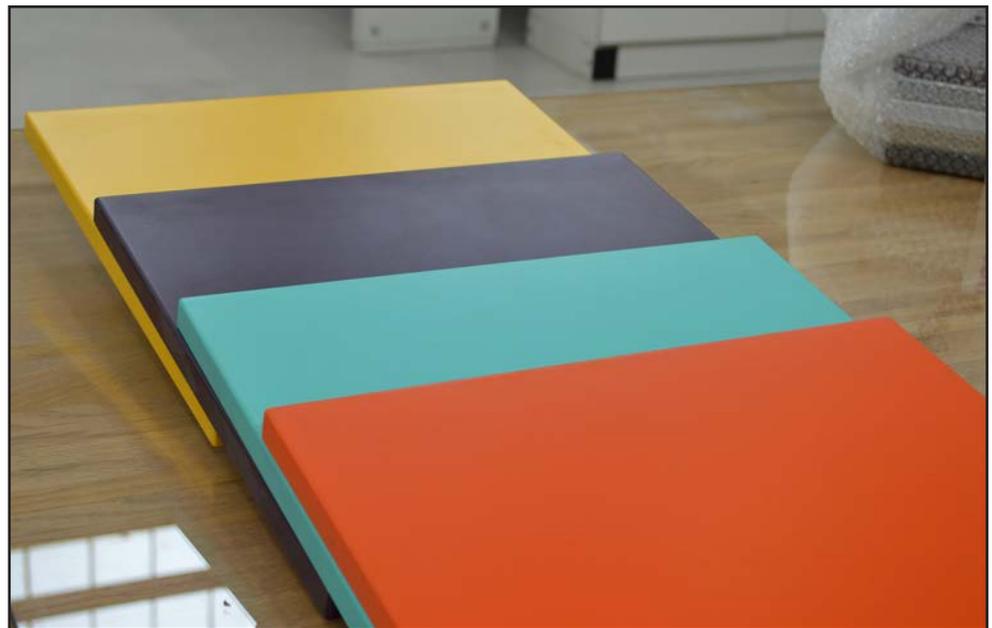
L'invincibile si 3bo will also be present: a circular saw equipped with the innovative "blade off" safety system, which minimises intrinsic risks through an intelligent detection system and an efficient blade exclusion mechanism.

### Aluminium machining

For the first time on display at the Technology Centre in Rimini, will be the MC 307 Falcon by Mecal Machinery, a Group company. This four-axis machining centre for aluminium, PVC, and steel profiles ensures high precision and productivity. It is the fastest in its class (up to 150 m/min) according to the company and stands out for its flexibility in machining aluminium profiles for both fenestration applications (doors, windows, façades) and furniture components (kitchens, wardrobes, office partitions, etc.).

### SCM Group

<https://www.scmgroup.com/en/scmwood/news-events/events/e233287/open-house>



# Altendorf at HOLZ-HANDWERK 2026

**2026 IS A SPECIAL year for Altendorf: the company is celebrating 120 years of Altendorf, a brand and machine manufacturing history that is closely linked to the development of modern panel and solid wood cutting. Since 1906, Altendorf has been synonymous with sliding table saws that are used in everyday craftsmanship around the world and have helped shape the industry for decades.**

## One brand. One promise: a uniform brand identity

Altendorf is sending a clear signal on its 120th anniversary: in future, all machines and digital solutions from the Altendorf Group will appear under a common name — Altendorf. What used to be Hebrock is now Altendorf. What previously stood side by side is now growing together — into a clearly structured, recognisable range for craftsmen and retailers.

For our partners, this means stronger brand presence, simpler communication, and consistent design. Machines, software, and services are integrated under one roof — with clear positioning and a consistent quality promise that inspires confidence.

For the company's customers, this means less complexity and more clarity. From sliding table saws to edgbanding machines, they can immediately see what belongs together — in terms of function, operation, and service. One brand, one system, one signature.

## From pioneer to the craftsman's best friend

120 years of Altendorf represents the transformation from machine pioneer to partner on equal terms. Many businesses work with Altendorf machines every day — and that is exactly where the company comes in: with solutions that arise from everyday workshop life, with a focus on intuitive operation, short set-up times, and maximum productivity.

The focus is on people for whom precision, reliability, and safety are not just buzzwords, but everyday requirements: carpenters, joiners, cabinetmakers, and workshop teams. At HOLZ-HANDWERK 2026, Altendorf invites you to an open exchange — right at the machine, with developments that are at home in the craft.

## Premiere: the new Altendorf F 30 sliding table saw

The new Altendorf F 30 sliding table saw will be presented live for the first time at HOLZ-HANDWERK. As a further development of the well-known WA-8/80 series, it transfers its basic principles to a modernised machine with additional functions, improved operating logic, and increased efficiency. The F 30 closes the gap between the F 25 and F 35 and has been designed to incorporate familiar processes while offering significant advances in precision and speed.

## F 45 sliding table saw

Altendorf is also showcasing other machines that are part of the daily toolkit for many businesses — above all the Altendorf F 45. Its combination of precision, reliability, and ergonomic operation has made it the benchmark in craftsmanship for decades.

## F 35 sliding table saw: different types for different requirements

The F 35 impresses with its smooth running, precise cutting quality, as well as ergonomic and easy operation. Various versions will be on display at the trade fair — from the robust all-rounder to the precise series model and the powerful solution for continuous use. All versions are NEXUS IIOT-ready — for the digital expansion of the workshop.

## HAND GUARD: simpler operation and more intuitive use for greater safety

With HAND GUARD, Altendorf is presenting an advanced version of its well-known safety assistance system at HOLZ-HANDWERK. The system offers AI-based safety technology with even simpler operation and significantly more intuitive use in everyday workshop operations.

## F and K series edgbanding machines: compact, precise, reproducible

As one of the central highlights of the trade fair, the revised F and K series show how modern edge processing works in the trade: compact, reproducible, and time-saving. Improved set-up times, tool-free motor replacement, a sensory double crosscut system, and clearly recognisable



ble process signals make daily work easier. An intuitive 15" touchscreen control, 3D visualization, and digital interfaces round off the operating concept. All essential processing steps will be demonstrated live in the workshop at HOLZ-HANDWERK.

## Digitally designed. Personally supported.

Whether in machine operation or service, Altendorf's digital solutions support everyday workshop life where it counts. With MAGIS Navi, Altendorf offers a proven operating assistant that simplifies settings, prevents errors, and speeds up processes.

The NEXUS IIOT platform creates transparency about machine statuses, simplifies maintenance and diagnostics — and is complemented by a new customer portal that centrally bundles service requests, appointments, and status messages. This creates a holistic understanding of service that thinks ahead, reduces workload, and fits seamlessly into everyday workshop life.

## Invitation to the trade

The Altendorf Group invites you to a dialogue at HOLZ-HANDWERK 2026: Experience new machines live, discuss practical solutions, and discover how productivity, ease of use, and digitalization can be implemented in your workshop.

## About Altendorf

Altendorf is the world's leading manufacturer of premium sliding table saws and has been shaping the woodworking trade since 1906. The brand stands for reliability, precision, and practical solutions that support everyday work in workshops around the world. Its best-known product — the F 45 — is internationally regarded as the benchmark for sliding table saws.

With innovations such as HAND GUARD, the first certified and AI supported safety assistance system for sliding table saws, Altendorf continues to set new standards in safety and modern workshop practice today. As part of its future orientation, all machines and digital solutions from the Altendorf Group will be marketed under the Altendorf name in the future. This also includes the proven edge banding machines, which were previously known under the Hebrock brand. For users, this results in a clearly structured range from a single source — with uniform origin, high quality, and solutions that fit together seamlessly from the first cut to the perfect edge. Altendorf is represented worldwide with subsidiaries in Australia, China, India, and the USA and employs around 300 people.

**Altendorf**

[www.altendorfgroup.com/en/](http://www.altendorfgroup.com/en/)

# Rotpunkt presents its 2026 Collection at Kbb Birmingham



**HAVING ATTENDED every show since 2014, Rotpunkt, leading manufacturer of climate friendly German fitted furniture returns to Kbb Birmingham as a show partner and exhibitor for the 12th consecutive year to present its brand-new 2026 furniture collection that serves every room in the home.**

Taking place on 1-4 March 2026 at the NEC Birmingham, Kbb 2026 will make way for the latest innovations by Rotpunkt, which are part of the company's brand-new 2026 Collection. Introducing a cross-programme of furniture, materials, and décors for the whole-home, Rotpunkt will display its brand-new solutions from its regular booth Q90, which are built to last, manage complex design briefs, and deliver aesthetics with tangible benefits such as product diversity, green attributes, and good quality-to-price ratio.

From new hardwood timbers through to modern frame op-

tions, fluted designs in wood and glass, and custom curves, Rotpunkt will introduce a selection of new doors for the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and living space alongside the complete collection of Fenix® colours to trade customers. It will also show a range of brand-new units in various cabinet heights, widths, and depths and the exclusive XTend collection offering H 2,470 mm full height one-piece doors and H 910 mm cabinets and island units.

2026 will also see the debut of Rotpunkt bathrooms, a new product category for the brand that offers UK retailers the ability to specify its furniture in a new home environment. Specially designed for the UK bathroom space, Rotpunkt will present a deluxe range of bathroom furniture able to transform the modern bathroom in a similar way to the kitchen, where clean lines, natural materials, and creative layouts help to showcase both the furniture and unique creative visions.

Matt Phillips, head of UK operations at Rotpunkt says, "Our primary focus at Kbb Birmingham 2026 is to show our customers that Rotpunkt is a true furniture brand; underlining our broader vision to be recognised not only as a premium kitchen brand, but as a comprehensive whole-home furniture partner, which goes beyond the kitchen. Variety has long been considered the spice of life, but it is also the lifeblood of any business when it comes to driving satisfaction and locking-in repeat business. This consistency in look and feel is central to our ambition to support coordinated interior schemes throughout the home, so that customers experience Rotpunkt as a unified brand serving the kitchen, bathroom, and added value living spaces like the utility room, laundry area, and dressing room."

The new 2026 Collection is further proof that Rotpunkt's core strengths lie in quality, product variety, diversity, ease of planning,

and taking a customer-oriented approach to design. In fact, the company's perspective on 'customer orientation' focuses solely on collaborative design in 2026 to offer user-centric furniture solutions, that when put in the hands of the retail community become a building block for sustainability.

Matt adds, "As development continues to remain a controlling factor in all aspects of Rotpunkt's vision, product range, and sales policy, we are proud to deliver a suite of products, which offer consistent growth, expandable trade margins, and a greater sense of security to our specialist retailers. And by demonstrating how versatile our furniture is, they can effectively cross-sell their customers to increase profits and provide a more streamlined sales process."

Rotpunkt 2026 whole-home furniture solutions are available now.

**Rotpunkt UK**  
email [info@rotpunktuk.com](mailto:info@rotpunktuk.com)  
[www.rotpunkt.co.uk](http://www.rotpunkt.co.uk)

# Abode returns to Kbb 2026 to launch latest innovations

**ABODE, an award-winning designer and distributor of market leading kitchen sinks and taps, bathroom taps, and showering solutions is thrilled to return to Kbb Birmingham 2026 and debut a range of brand-new product designs and exclusive design finishes for the kitchen and bathroom, alongside the complete relaunch of its popular boiling water tap collection.**

Taking place on 1-4 March 2026 at the NEC Birmingham, Abode is exhibiting a curated mix of new and existing product innovations on Stand P80, and presents four individual lifestyle pods, which capture the latest lifestyle and interior design trends influencing the kitchen and bathroom: (1) Traditional (2) Personalisation (3) Contemporary (4) Scandi. Each trend-focused area has been specially designed by Abode, to demonstrate how easy it is to create seamless product pairings from the same brand, which perfectly suit personal style ambitions and project requirements.

Leanne Stansfield, digital & marketing director at Abode says, "The stand will present a homely lifestyle feel to ensure that all visitors to the stand can relate to the type of kitchens presented and learn how they can plan each product into the respective area. We want to inspire our custom-

ers, and so each Abode lifestyle pod will present an aspirational kitchen environment, which has a clear point of difference, and serves real needs in terms of style, form, and function."

Hero products will include a host of innovations by Abode including the complete relaunch of the company's award-winning boiling water taps, which will debut its newly advanced 3X boiler technology, and a brand-new collection of tap designs for the first time!

From exclusive show promotions, competitions, product demonstrations, special show offers when signing up to the company's Accumulate® rewards programme, and six help-yourself drink stations featuring a working boiling water tap bar so visitors can takeaway an instant hot drink!

Here's what to expect from Abode — Stand P80:

**TRADITIONAL POD** — Radiating timeless elegance in a Shaker-style kitchen, visitors can step into the golden age with Abode's brand-new and classically styled Oxbury boiling water tap collection. Introducing traditional design with modern convenience, Oxbury also reveals two brand-new finishes for the classic kitchen space including Dark Bronze, which offers a warm metallic that moves away from

the brighter, more yellow tones of brass to present a darker, reddish brown finish option with ultra-matt surface texture. Dark Bronze also joins Polished Nickel, another new addition to the Abode finish library, which provides a richer alternative to contemporary chrome. Paired with a range of Classically ceramic sinks, each model is handcrafted and baked in premium fireclay to capture the essence of British style and seamlessly integrate into the kitchen space.

**PERSONALISATION POD** — Industrial in style to demonstrate the functionality, utility, and aesthetics of each product on display, Abode will present a range of innovations including its brand-new Persona boiling water tap and Ornate mixer taps, which will both feature fluted dual lever handles. Responding to the enduring trend for fluted interior design, Persona and Ornate are paired with the recently introduced Optima Belfast sink, which is designed with a fluted surface on one side and smooth on the other to offer a fresh way to introduce vertical grooves into the hybrid kitchen space across both the sink and taps. Shown on a Rotpunkt Zerox HPL XT Terra Grey kitchen to complement Abode's new Taupe sink colour.

**CONTEMPORARY POD** — Pre-

senting a modern architectural style, Abode will display a range of new and existing product lines including the launch of Arkitect, which offers a bold, sculptural form defined by clean geometric lines and three model types: a flex pro tap, a boiling water tap, and a boiling & filtered water tap. Coupled with the new LINARO granite sink collection that reveals three new and exclusive colourways by Abode, the contemporary room set presents a clean, minimalist kitchen characterised by a neutral colour palette, handleless furniture, and of-the-moment sinks and taps.

**SCANDI POD** — Exuding the warmth of Nordic-inspired design with Japanese-style minimalism, visitors will experience a deeper connection to the natural world when visiting Scandi. Light oak kitchen furniture makes way for the launch of Organico, a modern boiling water tap by Abode, also available with filtered cold water on demand. The company's award-winning Scandi-X boiling water tap also brings a touch of Nordic calm to the pale wood kitchen by blending natural materials with advanced functionality. Abode's popular Synchronised sink collection with integrated accessories will also be on display and reveal the new Taupe colour, as the latest style trends show a return to natural wood paired with custom sink and tap finishes. Shown on a Rotpunkt Scandinavian Oak kitchen.

Other stand highlights include Abode's customisable range of sink wastes and overflows in complementary finishes, so end users can pair each accessory to the sink and taps, and achieve a custom look throughout the wet zone. Abode will also present a dedicated bathroom roomset featuring products from the company's FOCUS 60 collection like the award-winning CAVA and IOX basins, quality brassware featuring the new Gunmetal finish, UNO showering solutions, and complementary mirrors and accessories.



**Abode**  
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[www.abodedesigns.co.uk](http://www.abodedesigns.co.uk)

# Rotpunkt debuts innovations at Kbb

**ROTPUNKT, a leading manufacturer of climate friendly German fitted furniture captures the rising demand for new-age materials, with the kitchen becoming a key player in adding tone and texture in 2026.**

As homeowners continue to discover how different surfaces can impact the overall design, function, and identity of a space, Matt Phillips, head of UK operations at Rotpunkt, says "No matter where you are in the home, natural tones and textures will dominate furniture design this year, with a focus on quality materials in wood, metal, glass, and stone."

**WOOD** — Whether light or dark, different species of oak and walnut will dominate the modern kitchen space in 2026. Available in a range of styles and formats, the latest kitchen schemes are featuring wood across the doors and drawer fronts, cupboard interiors, shelving, and even wall cladding in the same material as the furniture for a truly organic look and feel. The latest technique called wood drenching is putting all-wood schemes ahead of the painted kitchen to provide a fully immersive home environment, which is authentically rich and beautifully timeless.

**METAL** — Metal and visually tactile surface solutions are being introduced in the kitchen for their aesthetic appeal with metallic accents in brass, copper, and steel emerging as fresh picks in 2026 for accompanying key



components such as matt black and stainless-steel appliances and sinks through to warm brass or copper fixtures and fittings. Helping to provide visual depth and architectural clarity in the kitchen, the latest must-have metallic design elements are utilitarian in style, highly durable, and able to change appearance depending on the levels of decorative lighting or natural daylight.

**GLASS** — As glass continues to establish clear boundaries in the kitchen without creating physical barriers, there are two major trends influencing glass design this year, with the first being the

rising trend for coloured glass that create mood-enhancing living environments. Whether smoked, patterned, crystal clear, or mirrored through to different frame options and stylish illumination, the most popular glass colours in 2026 are moving towards warm, earthy, and muted tones in variations of brown and near-black. The second glass trend echoes the enduring trend for fluted and reeded kitchen interiors in lieu of conventional handleless designs. Welcoming highly structured cabinetry with vertical grooves, 2026 now opens the door to non-standard units

with fluted glass fronts. Top glass options include smoked brass to reflect the rise of metallic furniture and industrial-style hardware through to fluted glass for a modern take on grooved furniture and reeded accent walls.

**STONE** — Emulating the growing appetite for exposed plaster on the walls that resemble baked clay, stone décors continue to add texture across the furniture, worktops, and walls to create a solid foundation in terms of colour and construction, which beautifully pairs with the latest black appliances and hardware. Stone surfaces that look and feel organic like marble, textured concrete, ceramic and porcelain are now taking centre stage to become key design elements across the cabinets, walls, and flooring.

**STYLE** — Bespoke by nature, variations in furniture style have become a valuable asset in 2026 for introducing a personal touch in key living environments. Increasingly, end users want to feel like the home is definitively their space and so the most in demand design schemes are using high-grade materials to blend, contrast or drench their kitchen in the latest must-have doors and drawer fronts.

Rotpunkt is debuting its latest innovations at Kbb Birmingham on 1st to 4th March 2026, Stand Q90.

**Rotpunkt UK**  
Email [info@rotpunktuk.com](mailto:info@rotpunktuk.com)  
[www.rotpunkt.co.uk](http://www.rotpunkt.co.uk)  
[rotpunktuechen.de](http://rotpunktuechen.de)



# Winners of the 2026 Surface Design Awards



*Studio RAP Blue Voyage installation at the Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab Hotel.*

**THE SURFACE** Design Awards are thrilled to announce the winners of its 2026 awards, celebrating the best in surface design across the built environment. The awards ceremony was buzzing, with over a hundred people gathered to celebrate the winners, bringing together the design and architectural community to recognise outstanding projects that demonstrate both creativity and a commitment to sustain-

able practices. Presented by Hamish Kilburn of Kilburn Communications, the winners were awarded trophies designed and made by Revive Innovations using their RE-CD material, made with 100% recycled CDs.

This year's judging panel was flush with industry experts including: Muiywa Oki — president RIBA, Tina Norden — principal at Conran & Partners, Arthur Mamou-Mani — director of Mamou-Mani, Seetal Solanki

— founder and director of Matt-er, Barbara Chandler — founder of Green Grads, Oscar Pearce — co-founder of Design Burger, Michael Grubb — founder of Michael Grubb Studio and Tim Bowder-Ridger — principle and partner at Conran and Partners, Roddy Clarke — design journalist, presenter & consultant and Tim Gledstone — partner at Squire & Partners.

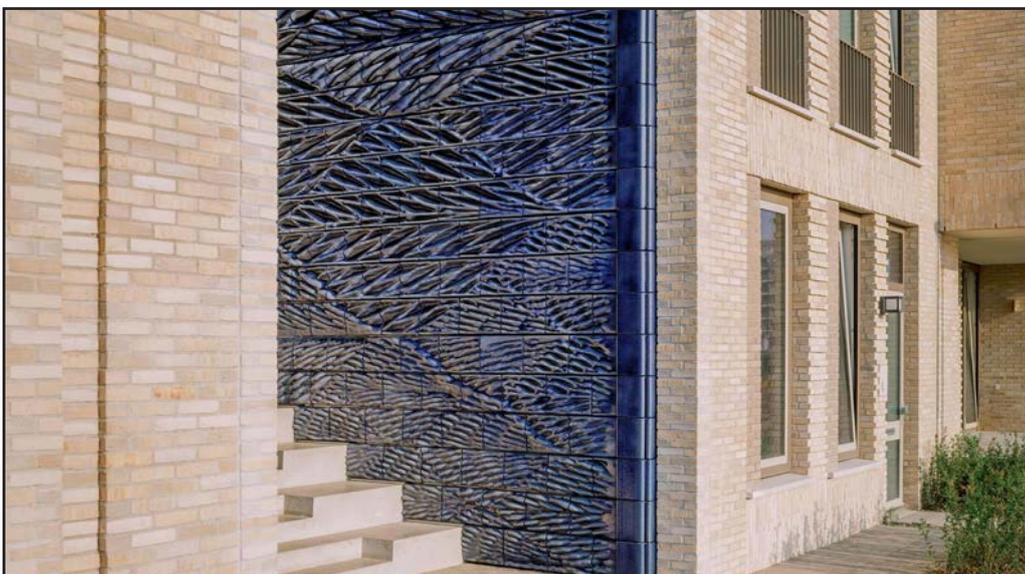
Amongst the standout winners were Studio RAP and Liza C De-

sign. Studio RAP had a fantastic night winning the Lighting, Hospitality, Public Realm and Façades categories. Also sweeping the board was Agri- Fruit-bag by Liza C Design who won the Regenerative Design, Innovation and Sustainability categories and the took the ultimate accolade of the Supreme Winner.

## Project

Studio RAP won the **Project** category with the Blue Voyage installation at the Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab Hotel in Dubai. This project redefines the decorative potential of ceramics through a monumental arrival experience featuring two six-by-nine-metre ceramic walls. Composed of approximately 900 unique 3D-printed tiles, the installation features wave-like patterns inspired by the nearby Gulf that interact dynamically with light and shadow throughout the day. By merging computational design with traditional glazing techniques, the project creates a sculptural gateway that guides guests toward the lobby while reflecting the hotel's coastal context.

**Public Realm** was also won by Studio RAP with New Delft Blue. The project reimagines the historic Dutch ceramic tradition



*Studio RAP New Delft Blue.*



**Aga Blonska CoWave.**

as a contemporary architectural experience through two gates composed of 3,000 unique 3D-printed tiles. Installed at the PoortMeesters courtyard in Delft, the gates feature algorithmically designed curves that cause blue glaze to pool and flow, creating a shimmering surface that reflects the city's porcelain heritage.

This project demonstrates how digital innovation can revitalise traditional craftsmanship, transforming a functional city threshold into a sensory experience for both residents and the public to enjoy.

The Ceramic House in Amsterdam by Studio RAP took home the award for **Façades**. It stands as one of the world's first fully 3D-printed ceramic façades, bringing the city's historic identity with contemporary innovation. Studio RAP utilised proprietary algorithms to generate textile inspired patterns that translate the craft of knitting into an architectural language of folds and layers. The façade transitions from pearl-white tiles at the street level to deep red tones on upper floors, utilising recycled clay and traditional Dutch glazing to celebrate both digital precision and material heritage.

**Product**

Agri-Fruit-Bag by Liza C Design was well loved by the judging panel and took home a multitude of awards, including **Regenerative Design** in the **Project** category as well as both the **Innovation** and **Sustainability** awards within the **Product** category. The project presents a visionary approach to circular regeneration by trans-

forming agricultural by-product, such as tomato leaves, into a functional biodegradable bio-film. This innovation replaces traditional plastic packaging with a single-layer, semi-translucent material that protects fruit from pests and sunburn while allowing farmers to monitor growth efficiently. The design features an integrated tie system to streamline the bagging process, and after the harvest, the material naturally decomposes to enrich the soil as fertiliser, closing the loop of the material cycle.

The **Material Transformation** category was won by ReCinder. Developed by Rosy Napper, ReCinder is the world's first 100% recycled translucent ceramic material made entirely from post-consumer fired ceramics and ash. This material innovation tackles the complex challenge of

recycling vitrified ceramic waste, which is traditionally deemed unrecyclable and diverted to landfills. Capable of creating sustainable lighting, furniture, and tableware, ReCinder has a 25% lower carbon footprint than traditional ceramics and demonstrates a regenerative model that transforms discarded waste into new material.

Tanaka Eyewear's Patina as Performance collection won the **Heritage & Craft** category. The collection advances the pre-plastic tradition of eyewear by utilising a stable, paper-based composite worked to jewellery tolerances. Each frame is made by a single artisan and features a kintsugi-inspired repair style that treats damage as part of the object's history rather than something to be erased. Designed for long-term service and circularity, the frames

utilise Richlite, a moisture-tolerant material that develops a natural patina over time, to create an heirloom-grade product intended to be kept for generations.

CoWave by Aga Blonska won the award for **Digital Integration**; it introduces a radical frontier in surface design by using neuroscience and artificial intelligence to translate human emotions into personalised 3D-printed acoustic panels.

Each unique piece is generated from a participant's EEG-informed subconscious responses, ensuring an intimate collaboration between the mind and the machine that results in one-of-a-kind designs. These modular panels are crafted from circular materials, including reclaimed plastics and olive waste, providing high performance sound absorption and diffusion for hospitality and residential environments.

The Agri-fruit-bag by Liza C Design is the **Supreme Winner** of the 2026 Surface Design Awards, distinguished by its visionary approach to circular regeneration. This project was highly favoured by the judging panel, earning multiple accolades for its innovative use of waste materials to replace traditional plastic packaging.

The winner of the very first edition of the **Emerging Talent Award** is David McGill with his project Ruvi Acoustic Tile, a slip-cast ceramic wall tile designed to improve the acoustic and sensory quality of public infrastructure.

**Surface Design Show**  
[www surfacedesignshow.com](http://www surfacedesignshow.com)



**ReCinder by Rosy Napper.**

# Back in Black (Walnut)

**WHEN BRISTOL-based luxury furniture manufacturer KONK Furniture decided to support its apprentice Jed Walker's entry into the Young Furniture Makers Award, it understood his vision would stand or fall by the materials used.**

Jed's aim? To produce a cabinet that would showcase exceptional joinery skills whilst challenging conventional furniture-making methods. To make the piece really stand out, both he and KONK knew that if form mattered as much as function, this meant ensuring the very highest quality at every level from the craftsmanship to the materials selected. Fortunately, they had the perfect product in mind.

So, to kickstart the project, they turned to longstanding supply chain partner, James Latham, a leading UK independent distributor of timber, panels, and decorative surfaces, with a clear brief: supply premium American Black Walnut. It was a decision which paid off, with Jed receiving a 'Highly Commended' accolade for his work, holding his own in one of the industry's most competitive arenas.

Taking a closer look at the project...

## Getting the specification right

James Latham's team at Yate depot drew on decades of expertise to help select the best looking American Black Walnut boards to meet three critical demands: grain-matching excellence, structural performance and versatility across functions.

The cabinet's sophisticated appearance depended on a seamless visual flow, and so the boards had to be grain-matched with precision. James Latham's extensive stock delivered the accuracy and continuity needed to fit the brief. But flawless aesthetics were only part of the story. The material had to be structurally sound to allow for mitred cabinet construction, along with hand-turned legs that were built up in laminated layers. The American Black Walnut proved to be strong enough for innovative joinery whilst also being dependably consistent and flexible to meet the design vision.

## Where craftsmanship meets material innovation

Jed's cabinet pushed boundaries. Striking walnut dowels protruded through the cabinet sides and were more than decorative features. Critically, they were integral to the peg-based system of construction. Remarkably, apart from door hinges, the entire piece was assembled using pegs rather than screws. The American Black Walnut's exceptional machinability and structural integrity meant it was more than up to the task, with CNC-machining creating the precise cones housing the dowels, whilst the material's stability and density ensured each peg joint held firm.

That's not where the use of the Black Walnut ended, as it was also used for the legs, which presented another challenge, as they needed to be created through a process of laminating layers and hand-turning. This required a material that would turn smoothly and finish beautifully. Thankfully, the Black Walnut's grain structure and density made this possible, enabling Jed to achieve the refined aesthetic demanded by the design.

Custom walnut drawer slides showcased both Jed's skill and the material's distinctive quality. The solid drawers, finished with black stain and featuring angled oak fronts with CNC-textured patterns, demonstrated the walnut's ability to accept different finishes whilst maintaining structural integrity.

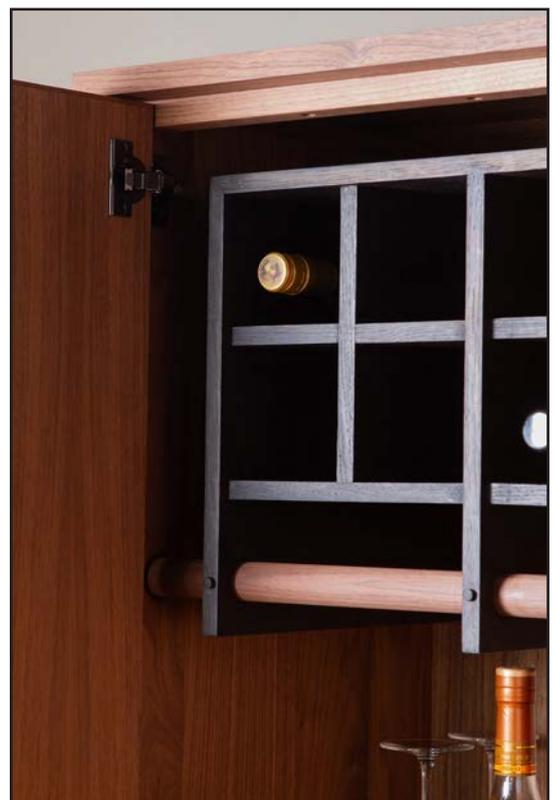
An internal wine rack, connected to the dowel system using the same peg construction, added yet another layer of complexity. Again, the Black Walnut provided the structural reliability required of the design. Beyond the timber, the cabinet fronts introduced an opportunity for peculiar innovation. The KONK furniture team incorporated Solidwool, a composite material made from British sheep's wool and bio-resin, laminated onto veneered Black Walnut and also lipped with it. The combination created a striking contrast whilst still sitting comfortably within a cohesive design.

## Recognition where it matters

The 'Highly Commended' honour at the Young Furniture Makers Award validated Jed's exceptional craftsmanship, the unrivalled design capabilities of the KONK Furniture team and the exceptional material choices that made the design possible. The judges praised the innovative use of traditional joinery techniques combined with contemporary design thinking, precisely the balance the collaboration had aimed to strike.

These achievements were made possible by the consistent quality and workability of the American Black Walnut. By providing access to premium materials and expert specification support, James Latham helped transform an ambitious design concept into a show stopping reality.

James Latham ● [www.lathamtimber.co.uk](http://www.lathamtimber.co.uk)



# Why skills will define manufacturing's future

by Ian Conyers

Technical Trainer at  
Daltons Wadkin

**IN MARCH, I will retire after 43 years in the woodworking and manufacturing industry.**

That sentence still feels strange to write.

My career began in 1983, straight out of school, as a wood machining apprentice. Like many of my generation, I learned my trade the traditional way: hands-on, on the shop floor, surrounded by experienced machinists who passed knowledge down through repetition, observation, and correction.

Over the decades that followed, I worked across joinery shops, specialist manufacturers, the Ministry of Defence (which I can't say a lot about), the prison service (which I talk more about later), point-of-sale production, and eventually into training roles that would take me across the UK, Ireland, and beyond.

Now, as I prepare to step away, it feels like I've come full circle — from apprentice to trainer — at a time when the industry is facing one of its biggest challenges: the loss of skills.

I didn't set out to work in training. That shift came later in my career, during an unexpected chapter in the prison service. I joined initially as a discipline officer before moving into workshop instruction, where the focus was on delivering technical qualifications to offenders preparing for release.

It was a challenging environment, but also an eye-opening one. You quickly learn that training isn't about manuals or checklists. It's about communication, patience, adaptability, and understanding how different people learn, particularly those with additional needs or low confidence.

That experience sparked something in me. It showed me that teaching practical skills, done properly, can genuinely change outcomes. When I later moved into industrial training roles, those lessons came with me, and they still shape how I approach training today.

One of the biggest changes I've seen over four decades is the disappearance of formal training routes. When I started, wood machining courses were commonplace. Today, there are very few colleges offering them at all. Funding and capacity pressures on FE colleges, combined with a doc-



umented fall in engineering and manufacturing apprenticeships and a contraction in technical and vocational providers, have led to an increasing difficulty in sustaining workshop-based, machinery intensive training in general. That means manufacturers can no longer rely on "ready-made" operators arriving with baseline skills. At the same time, machinery has become more advanced, more automated, and, crucially, higher risk if used incorrectly.

Training is no longer just about compliance. It's about productivity, safety, retention, and protecting investment. In my experience, done well, it's becoming a competitive advantage.

The decline in formal education routes is only part of the picture. Even where businesses recognise the need to train, there are real pressures holding them back. A 2025 "Skills for Success" report for engineering and manufacturing notes that average employer spending on training has dropped by around 27% since 2011, while public funding for adult skills fell by about 31% from its early-2000s peak, contributing to reduced workplace training days. This is supported by Government data which shows there has been a "notable decrease in participation rates and expenditure" on formal training, with employers citing cost pressures and difficulties releasing staff.

Our industry isn't an outlier with the challenges it faces. Production targets are tight, margins are under strain, and training is still too often seen as downtime rather than investment. In some cases, there's a fear that investing in people only makes them more attractive to competitors. In others, there's simply a lack of time, structure, or internal expertise to deliver training properly. The result is that training becomes reac-

tive rather than strategic — delivered after something goes wrong, instead of before it does.

Over the years, I've delivered training to hundreds of businesses — from two-person joinery shops to expansive teams behind global names like Dyson, Bentley, and Land Rover. The common thread across all of them is the same: the companies that invest in proper training get more from their people and their machines.

Spending years on the road gives you a unique perspective on what really happens on shop floors. One thing leaders often underestimate is how quickly bad habits creep in when training is treated as a one-off event. I've seen excellent machines underperform because only one person truly understands them. I've seen productivity suffer because processes aren't consistent. And I've seen safety risks increase when experience is assumed rather than refreshed.

One of the most common assumptions I encounter is that experience automatically equals competence. Operators are expected to "pick things up" because they've been around machinery for years. But without consistent reinforcement, bad habits form quietly. Knowledge becomes siloed with one individual, and when that person is absent, productivity and safety both suffer.

Good training doesn't remove responsibility from operators — it gives them clarity, consistency, and confidence in what's expected. The best workshops aren't necessarily the biggest, or the most automated. They're the ones where training is ongoing, standards are reinforced, and people feel supported rather than rushed.

While my background is in woodworking, one of the most interesting shifts I've seen is how transferable those core principles

have become. Modern workshops often process plastics, composites, insulation boards, and aluminium alongside timber.

Despite the materials changing, the fundamentals don't. Safe setting, safe operation, and understanding machine behaviour apply whether you're cutting wood, steel, or Perspex. That opens up real opportunities for cross-skilling teams and future-proofing the workforce, provided the training is done properly.

Over the past few years, I've been proud to be part of Daltons Wadkin's training team — known internally as the "Red Team". What started as a small function has grown into a dedicated, five-strong team delivering nationwide, PIABC-assured training around the globe.

That growth didn't happen by accident. It reflects a wider industry shift. Many manufacturers no longer have in-house maintenance or training capability, and demand for expert, practical support has increased as machinery becomes more complex.

What I've learned is that training works best when it's treated as an ongoing capability rather than a tick-box exercise. When it's embedded into how a business operates — alongside service, maintenance, and support — it becomes part of the culture rather than a one-off event.

As I look ahead to retirement, I feel incredibly fortunate. I've worked in an industry full of skilled, passionate people, and I've had the chance to pass knowledge on rather than just accumulate it. Machines will continue to evolve. Automation will improve. Software will get smarter. But none of it works without people who understand what they're doing and why they're doing it.

The risk for manufacturers is assuming this problem will resolve itself. Skills don't regenerate automatically, and neither does experience. Without deliberate investment, businesses risk owning increasingly sophisticated machinery without the in-house capability to run it safely, efficiently, or consistently. Over time, that gap shows up in downtime, quality issues, and lost confidence on the shop floor. After 43 years, that's the lesson I'll take with me: the future of manufacturing won't be defined by the machines we buy, but by the skills we invest in. That, and how seriously we take the responsibility of developing them.

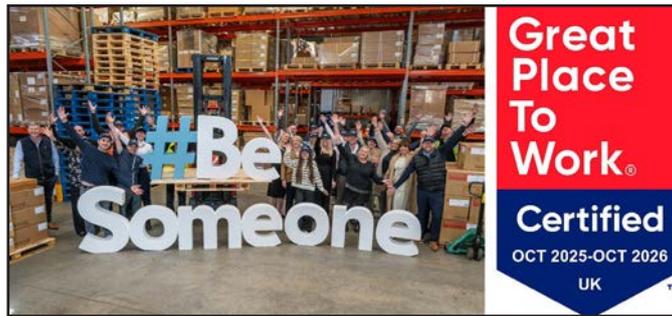
**Daltons Wadkin**  
[www.daltonsmachines.com](http://www.daltonsmachines.com)

# Abode is named a Great Place to Work®

**ABODE, a leading designer and distributor of market leading kitchen sinks and taps, bathroom taps, showering solutions and newly extended bathroom products is delighted to announce it has been certified as a Great Place to Work® in the UK, as well as Ireland, and South Africa.**

Achieved as part of Norcros plc, this certification is valid for one year and is a mark of Abode's prized family culture, which it has successfully built-up over the last two decades. Both Abode and Norcros regard its employees as their most valuable asset, and by focusing on inclusivity it can ensure a business model, which is underpinned by the commitment and efforts of everyone within the Abode family.

Matthew Pitt, managing director at Abode says, "We have been on an incredible journey since the company began in 2002, and I am so grateful that the sterling work of the entire Abode Family has been recognised. Everyone plays a vital role in the business, and being named a great place to work further acknowledges our staff's unwavering passion, diligence, and aptitude for quality product



design and service. We are only as good as the people we work with, and this is why everything we do centres around our team; after all, what would Abode be without the people behind it."

Helen Gopsill, chief people officer at Norcros plc adds, "This certification is really about our people — their openness, support, and commitment to each other. It recognises the everyday moments of trust, care, and teamwork that make Norcros a truly great place to work."

Ensuring the welfare, wellness, and involvement of everyone at Abode, the company has been accredited by the Investors In People since 2020, to provide further evidence of effective people

management, employee development, and a positive workplace culture. Since gaining this standard, Abode has maintained its certification by making several improvements throughout the business including updated communications, staff policies, schemes and business management processes to ensure it offers the very best for its people. Since the original accreditation was issued, Abode has successfully fulfilled two Investors In People reassessments so as a business, it can continue to put its people first.

Abode also operates a staff training programme in order to develop the skills and careers of its people while addressing training needs, which have been

identified on the job or self-evaluation. A confidential Whistleblowing hotline allows Abode staff to register any concerns outside of the normal grievance procedure, along with a staff suggestion scheme, free Flu Vaccination vouchers to all employees, access to life and wellbeing support, as well as exclusive offers delivered through the company's online trade portal.

Not only is Abode recognised as a Great Place to Work, it is also proud to be Planet Mark Certified, which goes beyond its people and demonstrates the company's ongoing commitment to reducing carbon emissions and building a more sustainable future for its staff and planet earth. Abode has been actively measuring with Planet Mark for the last four years and to retain its Certification, the company has successfully demonstrated continuous improvement in line with the Planet Mark Net Zero Certification Scheme Rules. For more information, please visit planetmark.com.

**Abode**  
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**info@abodedesigns.co.uk**  
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## FMB highlights the power of mentoring

**AS THE construction industry marked National Mentoring Month in January, the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) called on building firms to step up their mentoring efforts to help tackle the sector's deepening skills crisis.**

With the UK construction industry requiring an estimated 47,860 additional workers per year through to 2029, and 35% of the current workforce over the age of 50 and approaching retirement, the need to attract, train and retain the next generation of skilled tradespeople has never been more urgent.

SME construction firms train approximately three-quarters of all construction apprentices, demonstrating the sector's proud tradition of developing the workforce. However, with 61% of building firms reporting that their work has been affected by skills shortages, expanding mentoring programmes has become essential to the industry's future.

Brian Berry, chief executive of the FMB, said: "Mentoring has always been at the heart of how our industry passes on skills and values. The best builders I know learned from someone who invested their time to support and develop them.

"As we face an ongoing skills shortage, creating opportunities for experienced tradespeople to mentor others isn't just good for individual building companies, it's essential for the future of construc-

tion. Through mentoring, builders not only give back but also strengthen their own businesses by developing leadership and communication skills, building trusted networks and supporting the next generation."

**Federation of Master Builders ● www.fmb.org.uk**



# London's Build Academy welcomes the Minister for Industry

ON 5 FEBRUARY 2026, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) and Shooters Hill Sixth Form College, in London, welcomed Chris McDonald, Minister for Industry in the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to the Build Academy. The Build Academy is a unique pilot scheme put together to address the skills shortages in the repair, maintenance and improvement (RMI) construction sector, which includes green skills and retrofit.

The initiative, which is a departure from traditional apprenticeship schemes, connects learners from all walks of life with real SME building firms, offering hands-on experience and helping them become site-ready from day one. It gives local young people the chance to gain hands-on experience, health and safety know-how, business knowledge and confidence to step onto a live site and get stuck in.

The project works with 20 students at a time and sustains that number as individuals gain employment through the initiative's network of employers. The aim of the project is to place them into full-time employment with SMEs by June 2026.

The Build Academy pilot is aimed at students between the ages of 16 to 19 who are new to construction. They can be new entrants to the college or progressing from the college's core programmes. Tom, a current student at The Build Academy, said "it is the right place to be for practical skills." Tijan, who is also a student gaining experience through the initiative described The Build Academy as "a place to push past your limits."

The initiative forms part of the domestic retrofit area of the industry led Repair, Maintenance and Improvement (RMI) Sector Skills Plan, which is supported by CITB. Sector Skills Plans are action plans designed to address the specific needs of different sectors within the construction industry and are owned and shaped by construction industry stakeholders. These initiatives aim to align workforce supply with industry demand, improve training quality, and support the delivery of national priorities.

The availability of fully trained apprentices is becoming a significant issue for the construction industry across the UK. CITB's Construction Workforce Outlook forecasts over 47,000 extra construction workers are needed in the UK each year by 2029. In London in particular, the forecast shows that recruitment would have to increase by 8,460 workers per year by 2029 to meet current demands.



FMB chief executive Brian Berry and construction minister Chris McDonald MP.

Chris McDonald, Minister for Industry, said: "Britain needs more construction workers, and that's why I was pleased to visit the Build Academy today to see the pivotal role places like this are playing in bringing the next generation into this highly skilled profession.

"This Government is fully behind these efforts, in partnership with industry. That's why we're investing £625 million into construction skills training, and promoting the great work opportunities in this sector is a top priority of mine as Co-Chair of the Construction Leadership Council."

Tim Balcon, chief executive, CITB said: "The Build Academy shows what can be achieved when industry and education work together with real ambition. By giving young people hands-on experience with employers, we're helping them become site-ready from day one and supporting SMEs that urgently need new talent. We're proud to work with FMB and Shooters Hill College to build a more inclusive, skilled and future-focused construction workforce."

Brian Berry, FMB chief executive and RMI (Domestic

Retrofit) Sector Skills Plan Chair said: "The Build Academy training initiative is a new employer-led approach to workforce development in the building industry. Led primarily by FMB members, who are small, local builders that often struggle to hire apprentices due to risk, cost and administrative issues. It is not a traditional apprenticeship scheme; it's a brand-new initiative that creates employment pathways for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who might otherwise not have the opportunity.

"Crucially, this is not training for its own sake — it is designed to lead to real jobs and long-term careers at a time when our industry is grappling with well-documented skills shortages."

Geoff Osborne, Principal of Shooters Hill Sixth Form College said: "Today is about more than just a ministerial visit; it is a testament to the fact that our construction learners are part of something bigger. At the Build Academy we are transforming lives by preparing our learners for the next steps in a career within the construction industry that offers skills for lifelong learning. Seeing the Minister engage with our learners reinforces that they are the heartbeat of an industry that builds our future."

Federation of Master Builders ● [www.fmb.org.uk](http://www.fmb.org.uk)  
CITB ● [www.citb.co.uk](http://www.citb.co.uk)

# Championing apprenticeships in the North

**THE FEDERATION of Master Builders (FMB) Northern region celebrated National Apprenticeship Week 2026 by highlighting a new partnership with The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) designed to help more small construction businesses across the North offer apprenticeships and workplace experiences to young people.**

The collaboration comes as construction firms in Yorkshire, the North East, and the North West face growing skills shortages, with apprenticeships recognised as crucial to building a pipeline of qualified tradespeople for the region's building industry.

Through CEC's 'Let's Make It Work' campaign, the FMB is working to connect its members with local schools and colleges, making it easier for small building firms to take on apprentices and provide work experience placements that give young people a genuine taste of life on site.

Carolyn Frank, FMB regional director for the North, said: "The North has a proud tradition of craftsmanship and skilled trades, and our small builders are keeping that tradition alive. But we need to ensure the next generation has the skills and opportunities to continue that legacy.

"Apprenticeships are the lifeblood of our industry, and this partnership with The Careers & Enterprise Company will help more of our members in the North take that important step of opening their doors



to young people. Whether it's a joiner in Newcastle, a bricklayer in Leeds, or a plasterer in Manchester, every small firm has something valuable to offer an aspiring tradesperson."

Erica Chamberlain, head of strategic business partnerships at The Careers & Enterprise Company, said: "We're proud to be working with organisations like the FMB and SMEs across the North through our Let's Make It Work campaign, showcasing the art of the possible for small employers. SMEs make up over 99% of businesses

and have a vital role to play in widening access to meaningful workplace experiences. Yet too many young people still miss out simply because there aren't enough opportunities available.

"That's a missed opportunity, not just for young people, but for SMEs themselves. Employers across the North show how even small, hands-on businesses can offer high-quality workplace experiences that build essential skills, confidence and aspiration, helping to shape the workforce of the future."

The FMB Northern region encouraged its members to get involved during National Apprenticeship Week and beyond, highlighting the support available through the partnership to make taking on an apprentice or offering work experience as straightforward as possible.

**FMB ● [www.fmb.org.uk](http://www.fmb.org.uk)**

## FMB Cymru showcases apprenticeships

**DURING National Apprenticeship Week, members of the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) Cymru and their apprentices have been showcasing their skills to the Welsh Government's Skills Minister.**

The Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership, Jack Sargeant MS, visited an FMB member site operated by Excel Home Design in Pontyclun, where he toured the development and saw apprentices in action.

During the visit, the Minister met apprentices currently learning their trade and heard first-hand about the vital role small, local builders play in training Wales's construction workforce. The construction sector continues to face acute skills shortages, and the Federation of Master Builders is calling for greater support to help small firms offer and sustain apprenticeship placements.

Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership, Jack Sargeant, said: "We greatly value our partnership with the Federation of Master Builders in addressing construction skills, standards, and SME capacity. Construction is a critical sector for the Welsh economy, with a long and successful past in harnessing the power of apprenticeships for the benefit of employers, learners, and the wider socio-economic landscape. We are committed to strengthening its workforce and skills pipeline to meet construction, housing and retrofit ambitions.

"There is clear demand for Level 2 construction apprenticeship opportunities to be made available in Wales, and the new pathways we have announced today are proof our commitment to apprenticeships is unwavering. The sector can be confident

that Wales is building a modern, flexible and future focused apprenticeship system. Small builders like Excel Home Design train the majority of construction apprentices in Wales. We value that contribution immensely, and I was delighted to accept an invitation from the FMB Cymru to visit them and see first hand the positive impact of apprenticeships across Wales."

Ifan Glyn, director of FMB Cymru, added: "We were delighted to host the Minister on one of our members' sites and to discuss the key pinch points that are currently putting the brakes on the delivery of construction apprenticeships in Wales. Construction is a sector that relies heavily on employer-led apprenticeships, and it is encouraging to see the Minister engaging directly with the industry. Addressing these challenges will require close collaboration between all key stakeholders."

Russell Everett, managing director of Excel Home Design and an FMB member, concluded: "Apprenticeships have been vital to our business and to the construction industry as a whole. Training young people from the ground up allows us to develop the specific skills we need, whilst giving apprentices a strong foundation for a rewarding career.

"It was a pleasure to host the Minister and showcase the excellent work our apprentices are doing. Investing in their training is an investment in the future of Welsh construction, and we are proud to play our part in building the next generation of skilled tradespeople."

**FMB ● [www.fmb.org.uk](http://www.fmb.org.uk)**



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# SL Plastics strengthens production capabilities with XYZ INFINITE CNC technology

**FOR MORE than three decades, SL Plastics has been a quietly influential force inside Britain's machine-building supply chain. From the facility in the East of England, the company has become a trusted specialist in precision-machined parts, supplying engineered components into some of the most demanding industrial environments in the country — including food processing, packaging, conveyor and bottling machinery.**

Today, the business supports machine builders with a true “one-stop-shop” model for machined parts, including guides, wear strips, change parts and guarding assemblies. Meeting the expectations of these industries requires a rare combination of tight tolerances, repeatability, reliability and throughput. For SL Plastics, achieving that standard consistently has depended heavily on the company's strategic commitment to CNC routing technology — and in particular to a long-standing partnership with XYZ.

## A CNC Journey That Began in 1991

SL Plastics began machining sheet plastics in 1991, at a time when CNC routing was still emerging as an enabling technology for plastics manufacturing. The company's very first CNC router came from Pacer Systems — a brand which would eventually become part of XYZ, laying the foundation for a technical and commercial partnership that has now lasted 35 years.

From those early days, the company recognised that the machining demands of sheet plastics were uniquely challenging. Thick polymer stock materials and engineered plastics continue to be a staple in food and processing machinery due to their chemical resistance, lubrication-free operation and cleanliness, but they can be difficult to machine without the correct rigidity, spindle power and vacuum hold-down performance. Over time, those challenges drove SL Plastics toward increasingly specialised CNC platforms.

## Why XYZ — Machines Design Matched to Real Manufacturing Requirements

Over the years, SL Plastics has owned nine XYZ CNC routers. The majority have been INFINITE series systems, including their latest acquisition: the INFINITE 6010. The decision to standardise around the INFINITE platform was shaped by a mix of technical, operational and commercial considerations.

### 1. Sheet Size Capability

The plastics used by SL Plastics are typically supplied in large formats, often up to 3 m × 2 m. Bed size therefore became a primary factor when selecting CNC platforms. As the company puts it: “We have found these to be robust & reliable whilst also offering a bed size that suits the largest sheets we machine materials 3 m x 2 m”.

The INFINITE 6010 provides that footprint without compromise, allowing stock sheets to be processed with minimal trimming or waste. This also reduces manual handling and improves material logistics within the plant.

### 2. Power and Accuracy for Thick Plastics

High-density engineering plastics such as UHMW and acetal are widely used in conveyors, bottling machines and food-grade

OEM equipment. These materials can be 50-100 mm thick and require both torque and rigidity to machine efficiently.

SL Plastics reports: “They have also proven themselves to have the power and accuracy for us to machine even the thickest sheets”.

Cut quality and dimensional accuracy are non-negotiable since the majority of parts are functional machine components, not purely cosmetic.

### 3. Robustness and Reliability for Continuous Production

Unlike prototyping or small-run workshops, SL Plastics machines run daily on production tasks.

“Our portfolio of XYZ machines ensure we remain very competitive... giving us also the reliability that is needed for machines that are being worked 8 hours a day every day.”

Continuous operation places unique demands on spindle longevity, vacuum systems and controller stability — areas where the company credits XYZ with proven industrial robustness.

## Introducing the INFINITE 6010 — SL Plastics' Latest Investment

The company's newest addition — the INFINITE 6010 — reflects the current generation of XYZ innovation. The INFINITE platform is designed for large-format industrial routing with configurable options for multi-head operation, tool-change automation, enhanced vacuum, 24/7 production and peripheral automation technologies. The INFINITE router is a highly configurable CNC machine that is suitable for one-off, small batch production as well as high volume and high productivity applications, including woodworking, plastic fabrication, engineering plastic machining and so much more. For a wide range of routing operations, one can choose from high-speed spindles ranging from 5 HP to 15 HP. For knife cutting, choose from a tangential knife, which can be used for creasing and folding applications or an oscillating knife which can be used to process soft goods material.

For SL Plastics, performance of the INFINITE platform is closely tied to:

- handling of oversized sheet stock
- integrated vacuum zoning
- throughput efficiency
- repeatable accuracy
- high-duty spindle performance

One feature highlighted by the company is the vacuum bed zoning



system: “The ability to select the bed area that is vacuumed allows us to use any size of sheet or off-cut ensuring we get maximum yield from all material.”

Yield is a major cost driver in plastics manufacturing; optimising hold-down allows SL Plastics to extract value from offcuts that might otherwise be scrapped or downgraded.

### Improving Efficiency, Automation and Output Quality

Over the past 35 years, CNC technology has transformed SL Plastics’ production workflows. The company points to three key operational benefits:

#### 1. Consistency and Repeatability

Companies like SL Plastics expect interchangeable components with high dimensional consistency — particularly for wear strips, guiding parts and changeover assemblies. CNC routing ensures that a single digital file can produce repeatable results across batches or years.

“XYZ machines provide consistency not only in performance but also accuracy... this is critical to our own performance and efficiency.”

#### 2. Material Utilisation and Sheet Nesting

Large sheet capacity and vacuum zoning allow more aggressive nesting strategies, reducing waste and labour.

#### 3. Faster Production Cycles and Reduced Manual Machining

Before CNC technology was adopted, many polymer parts were produced using manual routing, drilling or milling techniques — slower, more labour-intensive processes that relied heavily on operator skill. CNC automation has allowed SL Plastics to redirect labour towards value-added tasks while maintaining shorter lead times for OEM customers.

### Integration and Workforce Development

Notably, the company reports that transitioning staff onto XYZ equipment requires minimal training: “Using the machines requires minimal training so it’s very simple to transition members of staff from manual machining to using these CNC routers.”

This has had a positive workforce impact in two ways:

- reducing dependency on highly specialised manual machinists
- enabling career progression within the CNC machining team

In fact, the company notes: “These machines have enabled us to effortlessly expand our CNC routing team and so give more opportunities to our staff for career progression.”

### Reliability, Software and Support — The Other Half of the Equation

SL Plastics emphasises that the technology alone isn’t the full story; the partnership has endured because the aftercare and application support have been equally robust: “After 35 years the continued support and innovation from XYZ has been a strong partnership.”

Occasional Windows update conflicts are cited as the primary integration issue encountered over three decades — and XYZ support re-

mained proactive: “XYZ are always ahead of the game to resolve any software glitches if that happens.”

Maintenance is managed through a hybrid model:

- in-house scheduled maintenance routines
- annual service contract with XYZ

This reduces unexpected downtime and protects spindle and vacuum system performance — critical for a machine that runs daily in a production environment.

### Cost Competitiveness and Market Positioning

In markets such as food and packaging machinery, competition is intense and OEMs increasingly expect short lead times. SL Plastics views CNC investment as a strategic requirement for staying competitive: “Our portfolio of XYZ machines ensure we remain very competitive within the marketplace.”

CNC automation has protected the business from:

- rising labour costs
- increased material pricing
- OEM downtime penalties
- more demanding product tolerances

The machines are described as central to the company’s commercial longevity.

### A Partnership Built for the Future

After nearly four decades and nine machines, the intent going forward is clear: “After 9 machines we have every confidence in XYZ... we are unlikely to look elsewhere as we continue to expand year on year.”

For an industry where switching suppliers can be costly and operationally disruptive, such loyalty is noteworthy. It reflects not just satisfaction with past performance but confidence that the platform will continue to support future capacity expansion and technological evolution.

### Conclusion

SL Plastics’ journey highlights the role that CNC routing technology plays in enabling British manufacturers to compete in high-expectation industrial supply chains. The INFINITE 6010 platform now sits at the centre of a production strategy built on:

- large-format sheet capability
- robust industrial construction
- accurate and repeatable machining
- high-duty utilisation
- strong OEM support

For a business that has survived — and grown — across multiple decades of economic cycles, shifts in manufacturing models, material science changes and customer expectation escalation, its long-standing relationship with XYZ stands as both a technical and strategic success story.



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# Combilift's 100,000th forklift raises €100,000 for global children's charity



**GLOBAL materials handling leader Combilift has celebrated a major manufacturing milestone by transforming its 100,000th forklift into a powerful force for good, raising and donating €100,000 to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund to support children in crisis worldwide.**

To mark the production of its 100,000th forklift, Combilift launched its largest-ever worldwide competition, offering the exclusive 100,000th "Golden Prize" multidirectional Combi-CBE. All proceeds raised were donated to UNICEF Ireland's Children's Emergency Fund.

The campaign generated €56,500 in ticket sales, and at a cheque presentation ceremony, Combilift announced it had topped up the total contribution to an impressive €100,000, underlining the company's long-standing commitment to corporate social responsibility.

Speaking at the handover, Combilift CEO and co-founder Martin McVicar said: "This campaign was designed not only to celebrate a major manufacturing achievement for Combilift, but also to make a meaningful difference beyond the factory floor. By supporting UNICEF, we are supporting one of the world's most effective humanitarian organisations and helping children who need it most."

The cheque was formally presented by Martin McVicar to Owen Buckley, UNICEF Ireland's head of corporate partnerships, and Michaela Plunkett, business development manager, in Monaghan.

Owen Buckley welcomed the donation, saying: "As we enter the

winter season, our priority is ensuring children affected by war and natural disasters have access to warm clothing, safe shelter and continued education. This generous contribution from Combilift will help UNICEF respond quickly to urgent needs."

The winning ticket was purchased by Kareen Farrell, who travelled to Combilift's headquarters in Monaghan to receive the one-of-a-kind 100,000th Combi-CBE "Golden Forklift." Reacting to her win, Kareen Farrell said: "I was absolutely delighted when I heard I had won, as I'm never lucky. My dad shared the competition details and bought a ticket to support UNICEF because it's a children's charity that helps children all over the world, so winning the forklift was an incredible bonus."

The Golden Forklift was first unveiled at the IMHX Exhibition in the UK before embarking on a European trade show tour, attracting strong international interest and reflecting Combilift's global customer base and shared commitment to positive social impact.

**UNICEF does not endorse any company, brand, product or service.**  
Combilift ● <https://combilift.com/win-a-truck/>



# GABBIANI P and PT

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**SCM expands its range of beam saws with the new gabbiani p60, p80, p95 and gabbiani pt80, pt95 models, designed for both batch-one and mass production.**

These automated machines put advanced technology within everyone's reach. Thanks to **SCM's guiding technology**, the production process becomes more intuitive and safer, using an intelligent LED bar system to guide operators during loading and processing.

The new models come fully equipped with high-end options to meet today's market demands, including:

- LED bar on the front of the machine, and on pt models, also on the rear lifting table
- Guided positioning by LED indicators for the air-floating tables
- Angular cutting device
- Motor power up to 18 kW

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# Hub rescued by Travis Perkins volunteers

**A COMMUNITY HUB which provides mental health support to south coast residents has received a lifeline after being damaged by poor weather — thanks to a leading UK builders' merchant.**

Coffee Mate, in Southampton, is the brainchild of Danny Carter, a popular hairstylist and content creator and his hub offers support to those suffering with their mental health in the local area.

When recent bad weather struck, Danny's hub was left severely damaged, and it was unable to open and offer its service to the local community.

Up stepped the team from Travis Perkins. They not only donated the materials needed to fix the hub, but staff at the Albert Road North branch in Southampton also volunteered to carry out the repairs.

Danny, founder of Coffee Mate, said: "The Travis Perkins branch on Albert Road North has been absolutely remarkable. I am so thankful for the work they have done — not only for providing valuable

materials to help repair the community hub, but also for carrying out the essential repairs. I feel as though I speak on behalf of the whole community and everyone that uses our hub when I thank them for the time and generous donations they have given us."

The branch provided cladding,

timber and plywood to repair the damage and utilised tools from the Travis Perkins' Hire offering. A group from the branch, including Paul Carpenter, Trevor Slade, Jody Furnival and Pete Turnbull, volunteered to do the work.

Danny set up his mobile coffee hub after witnessing several wel-

fare related incidents following his move to Southampton.

The hub is a renovated shipping container that serves coffee and cake while providing a warm place for people to go if they are struggling.

Paul Carpenter, branch manager at Albert Road North Travis Perkins, said: "I am from Southampton, and it is really good to help the local community. Danny has his unit right by our branch, and we reached out to him on Facebook once we became aware that he needed help. We admire greatly what Danny is trying to do for the local area. He set about starting this project completely on his own and we wanted to assist him. We have played a small part in helping him repair his damaged mobile coffee hub and we are delighted we could help him."

Travis Perkins is part of Travis Perkins plc and is believed to be the UK's largest supplier of building materials to the building and construction industry.

**Travis Perkins**  
[www.travisperkins.co.uk](http://www.travisperkins.co.uk)



*Travis Perkins staff at Coffee Mate (Paul Carpenter (middle) Jody Furnival (right) and Pete Turnbull (left)) with Danny.*

# Brands united under the Altendorf name

**IN THE YEAR of its 120th anniversary, the Altendorf Group is setting the course for the future. Under the motto "From pioneer to the craftsman's best friend", the company is consistently bundling its brands, expertise, and production structures under one name: Altendorf.**

In future, all of the group's machines and digital solutions will appear under the Altendorf brand — from cutting to edging. The edgebanding machines previously marketed under the name Hebrock are also fully integrated. With this step, the Altendorf Group is completing its transition from a multi-brand to a clear single-brand strategy.

What previously existed side by side is now growing together in terms of structure and content. For craftsmen and retailers, this means above all orientation and clarity: a uniform brand image, coordinated designs, a consistent operating and control concept, and integrated service and digital solutions — combined with a clear promise of quality from a single source.

The standardisation of the brand architecture is part of a long-term strategic orientation. The aim is to reduce complexity, strengthen market recognition, and further simplify cooperation with customers, retailers, and partners.

For users in workshops, the product portfolio will become clearer: from sliding table saws to edgebanding machines, it will be immediately apparent what belongs together — in terms of

function, operation, and service. For retail partners, there will be clear advantages in terms of consulting, communication, and public image.

Parallel to brand unification, Altendorf is investing specifically in its production and manufacturing structures. The production of edgebanding machines, previously located in Hüllhorst, is being gradually integrated into the production site in Minden. To this end, the company is investing a single-digit million sum in modern structures and processes.

By bundling its activities, Altendorf is pursuing the goal of creating synergies, harmonizing processes, and bringing together expertise. In addition to efficiency gains in manufacturing, the focus is on organisational and logistical optimisations. The investment strengthens the Minden location in the long term and creates the basis for further growth.

The content of the claim remains unchanged. For 120 years, Altendorf has been developing technologies for the trade — from the development of the Altendorf-type sliding table saw to today's digitally networked solutions.

The path from technological pioneer to a reliable partnership with the trade also shapes the current orientation of the company.

The single-brand strategy and investment in production are an expression of this self-image: to provide safe, productive, and easy-to-use technologies — with responsibility, partnership, and a clear vision of the future.

**Altendorf**  
[www.altendorfgroup.com/en/](http://www.altendorfgroup.com/en/)



*From Pioneer to the Craftsman's best Friend.*

# Premier Forest Products Ltd secures two Arnold Laver sites, safeguarding over 100 jobs



The Reading site.

**PREMIER Forest Products, one of the UK's leading timber companies, has acquired two Arnold Laver locations from the administrators of the National Timber Group England.**

The move secures 36 jobs at the two sites, with plans to increase that number to over 100 as the branches are rebuilt and re-staffed, ensuring continuity for customers and suppliers.

The acquisition of the Manchester and Reading operations is a strategic investment by the 32-year-old business, strengthening Premier Forest's presence in the two regions and supporting its long-term plans to build a sustainable UK-wide network.

Arnold Laver was an established brand within the National Timber Group England, which filed for administration in November

following ongoing financial pressures across the timber and construction markets.

Administrators have since been working to secure the future of viable parts of the business through the sale of selected sites and operations.

Terry Edgell, co-founder and CEO of Premier Forest Products, said: "Our priority throughout this process has been to provide sta-

bility for the affected teams and ensure customers continue to receive the service they rely on.

"We are pleased that we have been able to protect jobs and bring these two sites into the Premier Forest Group. This is a carefully considered decision that strengthens our ability to serve key regional markets.

"It supports the long-term growth plans for the wider business during challenging trading conditions for the industry as a whole."

The Reading and Manchester sites will now trade under the Premier Forest brand, with an immediate focus on stabilising operations, supporting colleagues through the transition, and re-establishing services to customers.

Terry Edgell added: "Premier Forest Products has remained independently owned for more than 30 years, and our approach has always been to think long term. This move reflects our commitment to building a sustainable future for the business, our people and our customers."



The Manchester site.

**Premier Forest Products**  
<https://premierforest.co.uk>

# Travis Perkins expands flagship Birmingham branch

**A LEADING UK builders' merchant has expanded its Birmingham Central branch — with the store more than doubling in size.**

Travis Perkins, located on 1 South Road in Hockley near the Jewellery Quarter, has greatly increased its capacity and created new jobs after work to improve its flagship Birmingham branch was completed in December.

The site, which has been home to a builders' merchant since 1946, was just an acre in size, but it is now roughly 2.2 acres and boasts a brand new Benchmark Kitchen showroom as well as an expanded Hire service.

The improved branch was officially revealed last week, with tradespeople able to purchase all their essential heavyside and lightside building materials — including timber, bricks and blocks as well as a wide variety of landscaping, drainage and lintels.

Dan Storer, regional director at Travis Perkins, said: "Entry to our old smaller site was challenging, and the customer experience

needed to be improved as it was very difficult at times.

"With its location so close to Birmingham, this is a very busy branch, and now there is so much more space, and we can get our customers in and out much quicker so they can get on with their jobs.

"We are thrilled with how it has turned out and it allows us to provide a better service to those

working on building projects and home improvements across the wider Birmingham area.

"We have an impressive Benchmark Kitchens showroom too, with designers in place to serve both the homeowner and tradespeople for all their kitchen needs."

The expansion has seen a significant increase in the team with eight new jobs created. The branch is open from Monday to

Friday from 7 am-4.30 pm, and 7 am-11 am on Saturday.

As part of the expansion, Travis Perkins donated £1,000 to Alzheimer's Society, the business' nominated charity.

Dan added: "We have an incredibly dedicated team that will continue to offer high-quality customer service, but we are delighted to have welcomed eight new colleagues to the branch.

"The fact we have also been able to make a generous donation to Alzheimer's Society is just another positive with all the brilliant work it does supporting people in the local community."

Travis Perkins is part of Travis Perkins plc and is believed to be the UK's largest supplier of building materials to the building and construction industry. Featuring a network of more than 550 branches, it supplies thousands of products and materials, including a tool hire service, to trade professionals and self-builders across the nation.

**Travis Perkins**  
[www.travisperkins.co.uk](http://www.travisperkins.co.uk)



*Colleagues at Travis Perkins' Birmingham Central branch celebrate its official opening after its expansion.*

# In the toolkit: wood care with Liberon

**AS A woodworking novice or anyone skilled in its complexities, it's invaluable to make sure that you always have readily to hand the right products and tools for the job. An expert in the area of wood care is Liberon, and the brand has come up with a recommendation for the top six items that are always needed in your toolkit in order to guarantee a beautiful right-first-time finish.**

UK head of marketing for Liberon, Richard Bradley says: "Whatever else you choose to put in your toolkit, making sure that this curated collection of products is included is a must.

"First of all, you'll need to have dyes in there. Spirit Wood Dye and Palette Wood Dye are non-negotiable so that both hardwoods and softwoods are catered for. Secondly, oils: you need options to cover all eventualities. So, include Finishing, Superior Danish & Pure Tung versions, because they have different uses.

"Finally, if you only include one kind of polish, make it a solid wax polish.

"My last word on this is to invest in the best of the best for these six items, because you'll rely on them so much. Unparalleled quality means you can use them to elevate your work to a professional standard, even if you're a woodworking rookie."

The Liberon brand is trusted by professionals, which is why even inexperienced learners can too. The company's Spirit Wood Dye is an ethanol-based product ideal for dense hardwoods. It is offered in eight colours. You can achieve an exact shade by mixing any of the 13 colours in which Liberon's Palette Wood Dye is available. This is a quick-drying, water-based option suitable for either soft- or hardwoods.

Liberon's Finishing Oil blends hard-wearing oils with resins, offering protection not only against water, but also heat and alcohol. Liberon's Superior Danish Oil achieves a superior satin gloss sheen, while also feeding, protecting and adding long life to both hard- and softwoods.

It protects against sunlight and is resistant to water, alcohol, heat and food acid. Liberon's Pure Tung Oil is hard-wearing and provides a long-lasting matt finish. It's ideal for surfaces most often in contact with food.

Liberon's Wax Polish Black Bison has a good content of carnauba wax, and being highly lustrous it makes wood look simply beautiful. Providing good resistance to finger and water marks, and ideal for small surfaces, it feeds, polishes, helps to prevent wood drying out, and has traditionally been used on antiques. It is available in eleven shades, from Clear and Neutral, through medium-toned options and including darker ones such as Tudor Oak and Dark Oak.

**Liberon** ● [www.liberon.co.uk](http://www.liberon.co.uk)



# Accu components bring artist's concepts to life

**LAURA MATHEWS, an acclaimed artist and designer who builds animal sculptures and puppets, has chosen precision components from Accu, one of the UK's leading precision component distributors, within her most ambitious project to date; building the Big LBX Dragon.**

Laura, who is based in the UK, was commissioned by US-based LightBurn Software to design and build a wooden dragon with a 5.5 m wingspan, that was almost three metres tall and with 19 moving parts that moved with lifelike precision, for its LBX event in New York.

As Laura started planning which fasteners she would need at the start of the project, she spoke to a contact within the industry who recommended Accu for its comprehensive range of fastenings and excellent customer service.

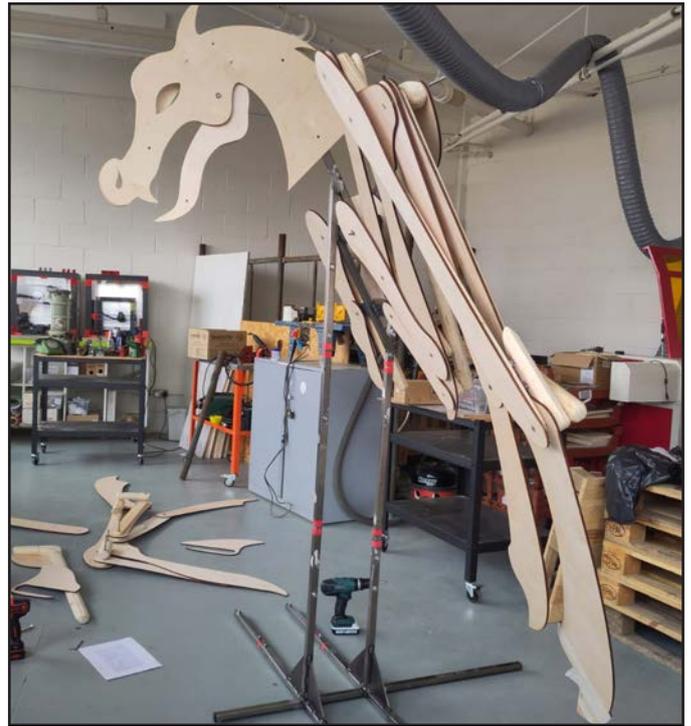
The dragon she created for the LBX event was sculpturally striking and mechanically complex. Laura needed specific fastener sizes and precision components to provide the backbone strength to the dragon. She chose M8 countersunk screws and M8 nyloc nuts to provide structural security and to allow for repeatable disassembly, while miniature M2 slotted countersunk bolts delivered visual elegance in Laura's articulated kits. With her genu-

ine interest in anatomy and biomechanics, Laura brings each of her creatures to life, with materials like wood, leather, string, wire and 3D printed material.

Artist Laura Mathews explains: "I used Accu's website to research parts, even before working on the design of my creations. The variety of lengths of screws that Accu offers, moving up in small increments, is incredibly useful. I've not found anywhere else that offers them in such ideal sizes."

For the LBX Dragon, Laura imported CAD models directly into her files to avoid clashes and reduce friction in the prototyping process. This workflow unlocked both speed and creative freedom — ensuring the mechanical motion of the dragon matched its lifelike beauty.

Patrick Faulkner, lead engineer at Accu, explains: "It is fantastic to see our components being used for everything from heavy industry engineering applications, through to creating fantastic artistic artworks. Many designers and design engineers appreciate how they can import our CAD files and how this gives them the confidence and reassurance that they have chosen the right component for the job. Our Quick Order function on our website is the icing on the cake, helping customers like Laura to better plan and purchase precision components."



Laura Mathews explains: "The LBX show was amazing. The installation went smoothly and the response from LightBurn and the visitors was wonderful. Hearing people gasp as the wings opened was exactly the reaction I was hoping for!"

It is vital that Laura's dragons have aesthetic value, just as much as engineering strength. Laura found that Accu's nuts, bolts and other fasteners, come in consistent colours — crucial for ensuring a uniform appearance, with every detail looking and performing correctly.

Beyond aesthetics, Accu's product range unlocks new design possibilities for Laura who uses M2 lengths (up to 45 mm), which are difficult to find from other suppliers, which means she does not need to compromise on layering or motion design.

The LBX Dragon challenged Laura to scale up her engineering knowledge — working with bearings, bushings and fasteners on a much larger structure than ever before.

She also finds Accu's technical resources extremely useful, from the online Help Hub to the engineering guides found in the news section.

Laura explains: "Working at this scale has been so rewarding. I've learnt so much, all of which I can take into future projects."

Laura is already planning on using Accu's R clips, clevis pins and brass fixings for an upcoming dragon puppet she is creating with large-scale human wings for a forthcoming exhibition, to bring a balance of mechanical reliability and visual elegance. She will use Accu components for every joint, hinge and motion link, including brass components and binder screws.

Laura has also benefited from Accu's quick order and dispatch service. She said "Accu's service is second to none. One time I had a critical last-minute order, where split shipping meant I could meet the project timeline — that kind of service is incredibly useful when you are already under pressure!"

She adds: "With Accu, the service is fast and reliable, the range is exceptional and the CAD files are invaluable."

Laura's miniature sculptures, such as her Little Bird, need miniature fixings to hold them together, which she has also found within the Accu range.

She concludes: "I love finding new components to solve new problems. It's part of the creative process now."

To see Laura's LBX Dragon, other puppets & sculptures, all that use Accu fixings, visit her YouTube channel.

**Accu**  
[www.accu.co.uk](http://www.accu.co.uk)



# Travis Perkins relocates Swansea branch

**A SOUTH-WEST Wales branch of the UK's largest builders' merchant has completed its relocation, significantly increasing in size, creating jobs and making it easier for customers to access.**

Travis Perkins' Swansea branch has moved to its new site on Upper Fforest Way, Llansamlet, from its previous location on the Cwmdu Industrial Estate on Carmarthen Road. It opened its doors for the first time earlier this week.

The switch, which has created eight new jobs, sees the new branch situated nearer to the M4, making it easier for tradespeople to access and reach their jobs.

The new location is set to offer a significant boost to operations with a new near three-acre site which includes a Benchmark Kitchens showroom, as well as the business's Hire offering.

Mackenzie Hallett, regional director for Travis Perkins, said: "We have a proud history of serving our customers in and around Swansea and this latest development takes our offering to the next level.

"To have Travis Perkins, Benchmark and Hire all under the same roof will provide a fantastic one-stop shop for all our customers across the area. It means we are perfectly placed to support any building project across the city, whatever the size or scale.

"The existing team has transitioned to the new branch and we have also created several new positions, with all colleagues ready

to offer the excellent customer service that Travis Perkins is renowned for."

The branch has more than 25,000 products in stock and sells a wide range of building and construction materials, including timber, plasterboard, insulation, bricks and blocks, as well as a comprehensive landscaping range and painting and decorating essentials. The branch is open

from 7 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday, from 8 am to noon on Saturdays and offers a Click & Collect and free delivery service.

As part of the relocation, Travis Perkins donated £2,000 to Alzheimer's Society, the business's nominated charity.

Mackenzie added: "Opening our new branch is exciting and we're especially proud to support Alzheimer's Society, a charity close to the hearts of all at Travis Perkins for the amazing work it does."

Travis Perkins is part of Travis Perkins plc and is the UK's largest supplier of building materials to the building and construction industry. Featuring a network of over 550 branches, it supplies thousands of products and materials, including a tool hire service, to trade professionals and self-builders across the nation.

It offers a wide range of quality timber, building materials, kitchens, plumbing and heating, landscaping, painting and decorating essentials and tools for the job.

**Travis Perkins**  
[www.travisperkins.co.uk](http://www.travisperkins.co.uk)



*Colleagues at Travis Perkins celebrate after the opening of its improved branch.*

# Power Poles joins the Wood Protection Association

**POWER POLES Ltd (PPL), a UK distributor of high-performance preservative treated wood poles has joined the Wood Protection Association (WPA).**

Based in Alexandra Dock, Newport, PPL was established in 2015 to source and supply poles for utility and telecommunication transmission

lines made from slow grown pine from sustainable forests in the north of Sweden and Finland. Every log is individually selected and processed by PPL's parent company Rundvirke Skog AB who pressure impregnate finished poles with warm, industrial grade creosote preservative until the sapwood is fully penetrated to provide a pole life of more than 50 years and give engineers confidence in these essential wood products.

In addition, PPL offers wood poles preserved with copper oil technologies across their customer base in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Speaking about their decision to join the WPA, PPL business controller Kathryn James said: "We've joined an organisation that drives the UK's wood treatment standards and promotes the use of pre-treated wood as the sustainable, low environmental impact material — we see this as essential support for our business."

WPA chairman Steve Young said: "PPL has built a strong position in the UK wood pole sector — being part of the WPA reinforces our ability to make the case for wood and the processes that deliver the high performance necessary for utility and telecoms line installations."

**Power Poles Ltd**  
[powerpolesuk.com](http://powerpolesuk.com)

**Wood Protection Association**  
[www.thewpa.org.uk](http://www.thewpa.org.uk)



*Creosote treated and individually tagged wood transmission poles in stock and ready to go. PPL has distribution centres in Newport, Forfar and Portadown.*

# Keeping it clean: Makita launches a new 40VMax XGT vacuum and dust extractor



**MAKITA** has added a new powerful and versatile 40VMax cordless vacuum cleaner to its XGT range. The VC013G is a highly portable L-Class dust extractor with automatic operation functionality as well as a site vacuum with impressive suction power, air flow volume, and runtimes.

Among the latest additions to Makita's 40VMax XGT battery

platform, the VC013G delivers a maximum sealed suction of 15 kilopascals (kPa) and an airflow volume of up to 2.0 cubic metres per minute (m<sup>3</sup>/min). This provides a substantial increase in power over previous 18V versions but with no increase in the physical size. Despite its power, it operates at no more than 75 decibels due to the design of the motor housing and supports. For excep-

tional dust capture and air quality it includes both a pre-filter and highly effective HEPA filter.

As an L-Class dust extractor it is suitable for use on tasks producing low-hazard dust such as cutting or sanding softwood and gypsum plasterboard. It also features Makita's AWS (Auto-Start Wireless System), which connects the vacuum to compatible tools using Bluetooth to automatically run the vacuum when the tool is in use.

The VC013G features a highly efficient brushless motor that minimises wasted energy and improves runtimes per battery charge compared to conventional brushed motors. This contributes to a runtime of between 22 and 120 minutes using a 5.0 Ah battery depending on the power setting. For extended runtimes, the vacuum is compatible with the 8.0 Ah XGT batteries.

The VC013G is also versatile, with easy adjustment of suction power to suit the task, wet cleaning achieved by fitting the wet filter, and a built-in blower func-

tion. It has a 4.5 litre wet capacity and a 7.5 litre dry capacity with the option to use with or without cloth filter or paper bags. Accessories, including a hose extension set and telescopic pipe, allow the vacuum to be tailored to meet the user's requirements.

Additionally, the compact VC013G vacuum is easy to move around site with an integrated carry handle and removeable shoulder strap. There is also the option to fit casters to the base to enable the vacuum to move with the user more freely.

Commenting on the launch, Kevin Brannigan, marketing manager at Makita said: "The new VC013G offers a powerful and compact option for Class-L dust extraction and site cleaning. Its portability means simple dust extraction can be achieved in a wide range of locations and as a 40VMax XGT vacuum, it delivers the power that professionals require."

**Makita**  
[www.makitauk.com](http://www.makitauk.com)



# Jefferson Tools launches new Tundra Impact Bit Set range

JEFFERSON TOOLS has expanded its popular Tundra® line-up with a new range of high performance Impact Bit Sets, designed to deliver exceptional strength, precision and reliability across a wide variety of demanding applications. The new collection — comprising 32, 46, and 54-piece sets — combines Flex Shank Torsion Technology, S2 impact-grade steel and magnetic quick-change functionality to meet the needs of modern tradespeople working with impact drivers and high-torque tools.

Built with professional users in mind, the Tundra Impact Bit range has been carefully engineered for versatility across multiple sectors, including construction, electrical, agricultural, and automotive. Each set comes in a robust, interlocking case that keeps bits secure, clearly visible, and easily transportable, helping professionals stay organised wherever they work.

“These new Tundra Impact Bit Sets are the result of listening to our customers,” explains Darren Binns, national sales manager at Jefferson Tools. “We wanted to create a range that truly matches the needs of today’s tradespeople — not just strong bits, but smart



organisation, flexibility and performance that can stand up to the toughest torque applications.”

Manufactured from premium S2 impact steel, the bits are designed to absorb torque shocks and resist wear, delivering the durability demanded by professionals who rely on their tools day in and day out. The Flex Shank Torsion Zone reduces stress on both the bit and the fastener by flexing

under heavy loads, improving torque transfer and extending bit life. This means users can work faster, apply more power and maintain precision even when driving through hard materials or corroded fixings.

Each set features a magnetic quick-lock bit holder for fast, secure bit changes — a small detail that makes a big difference on site or in the workshop. In fast-paced working environments, time spent switching bits or searching for the right one can add up.

The range offers three configurations to suit different needs. The 32-piece set provides an ideal everyday toolkit for standard jobs, while the 46-piece and 54-piece options extend capability for more specialised or heavy-duty tasks. Each case includes an assortment of Phillips, Pozi, Torx, Hex, and Torq Security bits, along with magnetic accessories and adaptors. Importantly, all cases interlock with one another, forming a modular storage system that can be stacked and carried together.

“Every trade environment brings its own challenges,” says Binns. “The Tundra sets are built to meet them head-on — offering strength, precision and the

reliability professionals count on.”

In practice, the Tundra Impact Bit range can help reduce downtime and improve fastening accuracy, both key factors for tradespeople who value consistency. Using lower-quality bits often leads to cam-out, slippage, or head damage — all of which can slow down progress and risk damaging materials or machinery. The precision-machined tips in the Tundra range ensure a tight, accurate fit that minimises wear on both the bit and the fastener, saving money over time.

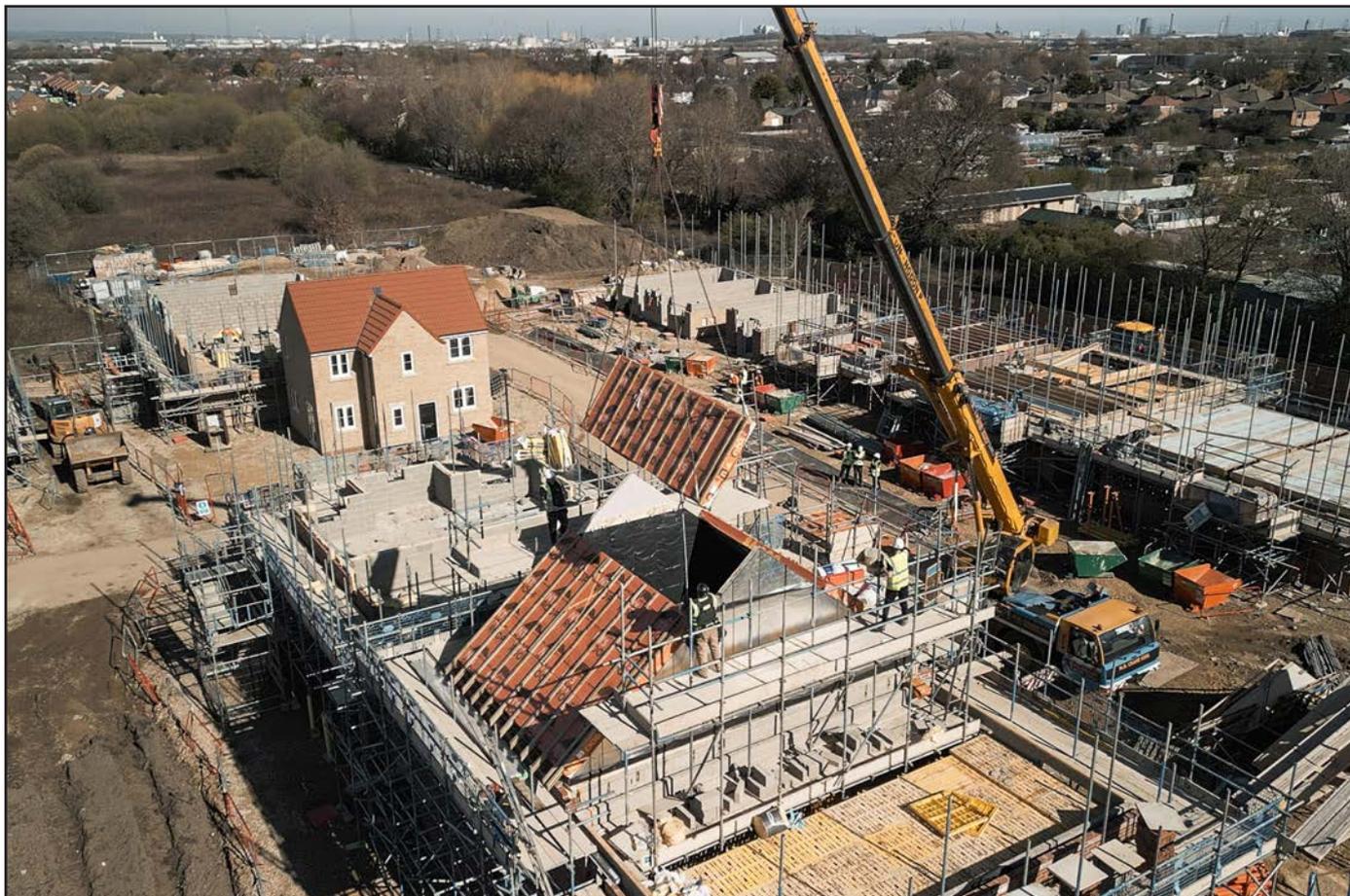
Storage and organisation are equally important for professional users. Each set comes in a rugged clear-lid case that keeps bits visible and secure, protecting them from dust and debris. The interlocking design allows users to tailor their setup, whether they’re storing tools in a van, on a bench, or carrying them between sites.

“These are impact bits made to last,” concludes Binns. “They’re engineered for people who depend on their tools day in, day out — the professionals who don’t have time for compromise.”

**Jefferson Tools**  
[www.jeffersontools.com](http://www.jeffersontools.com)



# Premier Forest Products strengthens timber engineering capability with acquisition of National Timber Systems



**PREMIER Forest Products has acquired engineered timber specialist National Timber Systems (NTS), strengthening and enhancing its timber engineering capability and solutions across the UK.**

National Timber Systems was previously part of National Timber Group England Ltd, which entered administration in late November. The business has been acquired from the administrators, securing continuity for NTS's operations, customers and manufacturing footprint. The acquisition safeguards 160 jobs at NTS, with plans to grow this number to 250.

National Timber Systems supplies national and regional housebuilders, as well as the construction and modular sectors, with a range of engineered timber products and services. These include

the BBA-accredited NTSROOF® panelised roof system, roof trusses, engineered joists, and specialist roof and floor cassette solutions.

Commenting on the acquisition, Terry Edgell, co-founder and chief executive officer of Premier Forest Products, said: "With our strategic experience in timber and long-term financial stability, we see National Timber Systems as an excellent fit for Premier Forest. NTS aligns with and enhances our existing Mon Timber Engineering offer in South Wales and the South West, and broadens our engineered timber solutions for customers across the UK.

"This acquisition will help support faster, more efficient housebuilding and modular construction through continued product innovation and the potential for

additional manufacturing capacity in the future."

The transaction sees Premier Forest acquiring NTS operations in Bristol, Catterick and Newcastle, plus the assets of the Sheffield site, with the aim to return to full production capacity to meet customer demand.

Nick Kershaw, managing director of National Timber Systems, added: "I am delighted to be joining such a well-established timber distribution and manufacturing specialist. Premier Forest has a strong reputation for quality and service, and we see them as an excellent cultural fit, enabling NTS to continue to grow and develop.

"On behalf of my team, I would like to thank Premier Forest Products for the trust and confidence they have shown in NTS and its senior leadership team. We look

forward to achieving further growth in 2026 and beyond."

The acquisition supports the UK Government's housebuilding strategy by increasing capacity and capability in modern methods of construction, helping the industry deliver new homes more quickly, efficiently and sustainably. The acquisition follows the recent purchase of the Arnold Laver sites in Manchester, Reading and Hull from the administrators of National Timber Group England Ltd.

Premier Forest is headquartered in Newport, Wales, and is one of the UK's leading independent timber distribution and manufacturing groups.

**Premier Forest Products**  
<https://premierforest.co.uk>

# Makita's new framing nailers are driven to perform



**MAKITA has expanded its professional cordless range with the introduction of the brushless and high-performance BN001GZ and BN002GZ Framing Nailers. Built on Makita's advanced XGT® 40VMax platform, the models combine power, precision and reliability to deliver quality results no matter what the task is at hand.**

The new framing nailers deliver powerful performance combined with the freedom and efficiency required on construction sites. Both offer a true pneumatic feel due to the increased compression speed of its pneumatic spring: this delivers the ideal balance of power and speed.

Both the BN001GZ and the BN002GZ feature a significantly improved rapid firing capability of up to four shots per second, enabling fast job completion without compromising on accuracy.

The BN001GZ drives clipped-head nails up to 90 mm in length

with a 2.9-3.3 mm gauge with a magazine angle of 30-34 degrees, whereas the BN002GZ drives round-head nails up to 90 mm in length with a 2.9-3.8 mm gauge with a magazine angle of 20-22 degrees.

The nailers also offer flexible operation with a full sequential mode for single shot nailing and a contact actuation mode for continuous nailing.

Both models share a range of convenient smart features. These include a built-in LED light with pre-glow and afterglow functions to illuminate dark workspaces.

A convenient viewing window also allows users to quickly check the remaining nail quantity, while an integrated anti-dry fire mechanism activates before the nail count reaches zero to help prevent missed shots.

Additionally, the tools have an adjustable driving depth dial and an anti-slip nose with a re-designed tip shape to ensure sta-

ble, efficient performance, even during angled nailing. Each tool is also equipped with a practical belt hook and a 38 mm rafter

hook, allowing easy hanging on ladders, scaffolding and timbers.

**Makita**  
[www.makita.com](http://www.makita.com)



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# Ipswich youngsters going back to their roots with new vegetable patch



**A GROUP of green-fingered Ipswich primary school children will have the chance to grow their own vegetables this year — thanks to a donation from a leading UK builders' merchant.**

Youngsters at Sprites Primary Academy on Stonechat Road have been the beneficiaries of a generous material donation from Travis Perkins to help them build new vegetable patches at their school.

The work was a joint venture carried out by Travis Perkins' Ipswich branch, situated on Hadleigh Road Industrial Estate, and one of its customers, Gipping Construction Limited.

The branch donated eight sleepers for the garden and Gipping Construction's site manager, Dale Gregory, did the construction work.

Mark Lockwood, Ipswich assistant branch manager, said: "Gipping Construction are customers of ours and when they explained to us that they wanted to make a vegetable garden for the children at Sprites Primary Academy, we were more than happy to help.

"It is nice for the children to be able to grow their own vegetables at school and we are pleased with how the new structure has turned out.

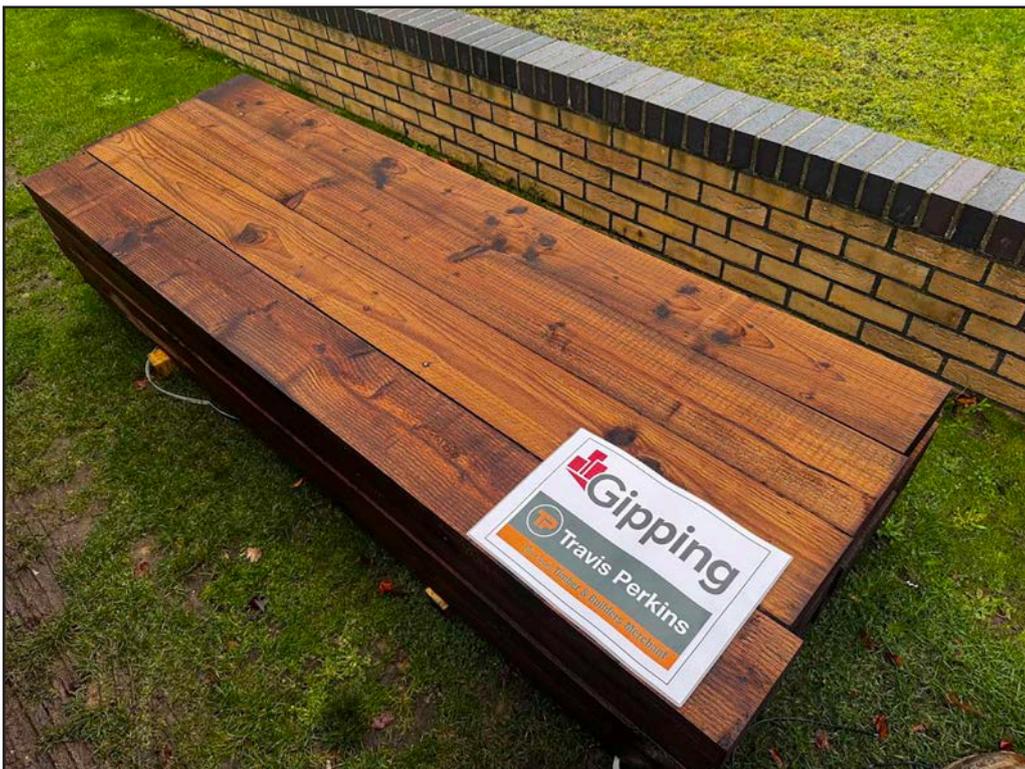
"It will be fantastic for the children to learn about the origins of food production, and we are thrilled to be helping with this important community donation."

Dale, from Gipping Construction, said: "The team at the school was over the moon and the pupils are super excited to start planting in early spring. My two brothers-in-law and I will return in early spring to install the membrane and supply and install the topsoil."

Travis Perkins is part of Travis Perkins plc and is believed to be the UK's largest supplier of building materials to the building and construction industry. Featuring a network of over 500 branches, it supplies thousands of products and materials, including a tool hire service, to trade professionals and self-builders across the nation.

It offers a wide range of quality timber, building materials, kitchens, plumbing and heating, landscaping, painting and decorating essentials and tools for the job.

**Travis Perkins**  
www.travisperkins.co.uk



# Timber treading lightly on the landscape — the future for carbon negative building materials



**IT WAS** back in 2012 in its Living Planet Report when the World Wildlife Fund asserted that, if the Western developed nations continued with their pattern of consumption, we would need three planets' worth of resources by 2050. During the years since then, consumerism and population have expanded across regions like Africa and parts of Asia, with supposedly sustainable activities such as sourcing the minerals required for electrical vehicles steadily scarring once pristine landscapes.

Meanwhile, the extra 1.1 billion people added to the population over that time not only have to be fed but also accommodated which means the need to access sufficient environmentally-friendly, and ideally carbon negative, building materials has become just as important a goal as maximising the cultivation of drought resistant plants. Undoubtedly, the UK is by no means the only country where housebuilding is failing to keep up with the crisis in demand.

## MMC solutions require material advancements

The past quarter century has seen significant increases in the use of Offsite technology or Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), with engineered timber being the most popular primary material across the sector in most of Europe; with producers of competing materials also embracing sustainability goals.

Carbon negative materials are defined as those which sequester more carbon than they emit during their life cycle with other examples including hempcrete and recycled steel, aluminium or concrete. All of them, though particularly the trio of metals, constitute a precarious balance involving embodied energy, the depletion of natural resources and the time required for their replacement. Significantly, however, the formation of ores and other mineral deposits are defined by geological epochs rather decades.

As an increasingly important and costly factor, the amount of energy which goes into producing common building materials is well understood, with recycled steel requiring 74% less energy for its manufacture than the virgin product, a figure which rises to 95% for recycled aluminium which is popular for secondary structural elements like curtain walling. Recycled steel is also now being utilised for a minor proportion of the rebar required to take the tensile forces within reinforced concrete, while recycled aggregates and waste products, like pulverised fuel ash and ground granulated blast furnace slag, are routinely specified to off-

set the use of energy intense cement. Ironically though, the supply of PFA and GGBS is rapidly reducing as coal-fired power plants and steel foundries are razed to the ground in the fight to counter climate change, making the construction industry's quest for "ConcreteZero" ever more difficult.

The harsh reality, then, is that the heavyside construction methodologies which shaped so much of the infrastructure which surrounds us is desperately scrabbling to reach the level of sustainability which for timber can quite literally come naturally. This fact does not, of course, mean that timber-based building systems are automatically virtuous, and due diligence has to be employed to ensure that their specification will be good for the planet.

As the recent COP 30 in Brazil reminded us, forests are the lungs of the Earth, a resource we squander at our peril which is why chain of custody and whole life strategies for the use of wood are crucial. Indeed, the need for constant vigilance was highlighted last year by the organisation Earthsight when it produced the video entitled "Blood stained Birch" which exposed how since the start of the war in Ukraine, more than €1 billion of Russian plywood has been wrongly given FSC accreditation by China and sold into Europe.

Once fully implemented, the European Union's Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) will offer a substantial bulwark against illegal and unsustainable cropping of timber, but responsible manufacturers have already made significant strides to ensure their own operations are as well managed and transparent as possible.

With a high proportion of the company's supplies of raw materials coming from properly-managed forests within the British Isles, and huge investment having been made in areas like production, transport and cutting waste, coupled with the use of biomass for the drying processes and a policy of only buying power from guaranteed renewable sources, the entire product range of West Fraser in the UK has now achieved Carbon Negative status. This ensures its own customer network can be assured that the panel products they are using to produce structural insulated panels (SIPs) and other offsite systems like floor cassettes, as well as for sheathing, decking and other applications, all fully meet the spirit as well as the regulations which will expand the use of carbon negative building materials.

West Fraser ● <https://uk.westfraser.com/>

# Tilhill Forestry launches UK first, cold chain tree delivery service to maximise establishment success

**IN AN industry first, Maelor Forest Nurseries, part of Tilhill Forestry and a member of BSW Group, has introduced a market leading national delivery model for young trees. The new service integrates cold chain vehicles, specialist flatbeds, and truck mounted forklifts to protect tree health from nursery to planting site and significantly improve woodland establishment outcomes.**

The system has been developed to safeguard bare root and cell grown trees from weather-related and handling stress, ensuring safer, more efficient delivery and better long-term performance for woodlands across the UK.

As the UK's largest commercial tree nursery, Maelor already offers highly controlled growing environments through its advanced mini-plug facility and ongoing investment in improved tree gene-

tics. However, temperature fluctuations during transport remain a critical threat to tree health, particularly during the vulnerable period between lifting and planting.

When bare root trees are exposed to temperatures of 4°C and above, they begin to respire. This rapidly consumes vital carbohydrate reserves and can irreversibly damage fine root tissues, reducing the tree's capacity to re-establish in soil. Recent years have seen increasingly erratic spring and autumn weather, increasing the risk of trees breaking dormancy while still in storage or transit.

Cold chain transport prevents this by maintaining saplings in a stable, dormant state. By keeping temperatures consistently low, respiration is suppressed, energy stores are preserved and the risk of dehydration and disease is minimised.

Trees therefore arrive on site

in optimal physiological condition, ready for rapid rooting and improved establishment, even within today's compressed and unpredictable planting windows.

To enhance delivery capability even further, parent company BSW Group has expanded logistics with specialist flatbed vehicles and truck-mounted forklifts. This creates a fully integrated, mechanised delivery system. The flatbed allows for secure, space optimised loads that can access remote or constrained sites, while onboard forklifts enable fast, safe unloading without manual handling or additional machinery. This reduces both operational risk and time on site for forestry teams.

This new tree-first delivery service is now the standard for all Maelor customers, ensuring consistent, high-quality handling from collection to planting.

Andrew Henry, nursery direc-

tor at Tilhill Forestry, said: "This development is about more than transport — it's about quality, consistency and giving trees the best possible start."

"As part of the UK's largest integrated forestry and timber business, we're uniquely positioned to innovate across the entire supply chain. By combining cold storage, efficient logistics and on-site mechanisation, we're helping foresters, landowners and investors achieve stronger establishment results in an increasingly challenging climate."

This new delivery model reinforces Tilhill Forestry and the wider BSW Group's commitment to raising standards across UK forestry, reducing risk, improving establishment success and supporting the long-term resilience of new woodlands.

**Maelor Forest Nurseries**  
[www.maelor.co.uk](http://www.maelor.co.uk)



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# AkzoNobel Powder Coatings highlights its top sustainability performers with Eco+ products

**AKZONOBEL Powder Coatings recently introduced Eco+ products, a dedicated portfolio that brings together its most sustainable powder coating solutions from the Interpon and Resicoat portfolios under one clear designation, bringing clarity, confidence and proof to sustainable coating choices.**

The Eco+ portfolio focuses on powder coatings that deliver measurable sustainability improvements alongside clear performance benefits in defined areas.

These products reduce energy use, waste and carbon emissions, extend product lifespan or improve process efficiency, helping customers improve environmental impact while also strengthening operational performance.

Products earn Eco+ status based on measurable sustainability performance, assessed against a clear, data-backed set of criteria that verify improvement in one or more defined sustainability areas.

Every Eco+ product qualifies based on at least one of six defined sustainability benefits:

- Reduced energy consumption through lower curing temperatures and faster curing cycles
- Increased productivity with single-layer systems, fewer process steps and less rework
- Less waste during manufacturing and application, including reduced leftover powder
- Reduced material consumption through right-first-time performance and optimized coverage

- Longer-lasting performance, with durable and super-durable coatings that protect assets for decades
- Reduced carbon footprint, enabled by smarter raw material choices, including bio-attributed resins

“Powder coatings are already one of the most sustainable coating technologies available,” said Jorrit van Rijn, marketing director of AkzoNobel Powder Coatings. “With Eco+, we make it easier for customers to see where sustainability genuinely adds value. Whether it’s lower energy use, greater efficiency or longer service life, Eco+ highlights the powder coating solutions that help customers reduce their impact while improving how their operations perform. That’s what value-driven sustainability means to us.”

By making sustainability performance clear and comparable, Eco+ helps customers own their impact by understanding what improves, where it improves and why that matters for their business and the environment. The Eco+ portfolio covers a wide range of industries and applications, from architecture and automotive to appliances, functional and general industrial use, delivering benefits such as low-temperature curing, high durability, extended lifetime through enhanced corrosion protection and improved material efficiency.

“With Eco+, we’re not asking customers to choose between sustainability and performance,” added Mr van Rijn. “We’re showing that the right powder coatings can deliver both, and that’s how real progress is made.”

**AkzoNobel**

[www.interpon.com/sustainability/eco-plus-powder-coatings](http://www.interpon.com/sustainability/eco-plus-powder-coatings)



# Blackheath Products bolsters KBB proposition with new Bushboard Omega partnership

**BLACKHEATH Products has partnered with Bushboard, a Wilsonart brand, to bring its leading Omega range of laminate kitchen worktops to KBB customers nationwide.**

The addition of the Omega collection to Blackheath Products' portfolio further strengthens its longstanding partnership with Wilsonart, adding to a range which already includes a variety of products from the engineered kitchen surface specialist; Bushboard.

A leading trade-only supplier with a UK-wide distribution network, Blackheath Products provides worktops and decorative surfaces to the construction and furniture sectors, including shop fitters, exhibition contractors, laminate fabricators, kitchen manufacturers, builders' merchants, plus kitchen and bathroom retailers.

The announcement follows the recent refresh of Bushboard's Omega range, which has seen the brand unveil a fresh identity and updated product offer for its long-established collection of worktops, reinforcing its commitment to premium, design-led kitchen surfaces.

The relaunched Omega collection spans three curated tiers: a Sleek 22 mm square-edge worktop inspired by marble and stone; a Modern 38 mm square-edge range of sophisticated wood, marble and stone designs; and a Classic selection of timeless 38mm postformed surfaces; all of which are supported by matching worktops, splashbacks, upstands and breakfast bars.

By adding Omega to its product portfolio, Blackheath is aiming to leverage the strength of the Omega brand in a way that further enhances its reputation for premium quality products and unrivalled customer service. Customers operating across the sector can now benefit from a UK-produced, premium kitchen worktops collection that blends Wilsonart's innovative approach to developing design-led worksurface solutions with Blackheath Products' distribution strength.

The bolstered partnership between two of the KBB sector's leading brands will also be a boost to customers recovering from the disruption caused by International Decorative Surfaces' (IDS) exit from the market just over 12 months ago.

Mark Murphy, managing director at Blackheath Products said: "The addition of Bushboard's Omega collection to our product portfolio significantly strengthens our capacity to meet our customers' demand for high-quality kitchen worktops from a brand they can trust. We've enjoyed success with the popularity of Bushboard's Zenith collection and have no doubt the offer of a refreshed Omega range will only build on that momentum."

Nick Jones, director worktops EMEA at Bushboard, added: "This latest partnership is the result of two ambitious organisations with a shared set of values, a commitment to quality and a real passion for outstanding customer service. We already know the potential Omega has to capture the imaginations of a raft of KBB customers and are really looking forward to seeing both organisations working together to maximise every sales opportunity."

**Bushboard**

[www.bushboard.co.uk/product-overview-omega](http://www.bushboard.co.uk/product-overview-omega)

**Blackheath Products**

[www.blackheathproducts.co.uk](http://www.blackheathproducts.co.uk)



*Warm Linen: Modern Ashdown Oak*



*Dusky Pink: Classic Chalet Oak*

# A staple component in homes since 1966!

MDF is a staple component in most homes; the panel product has been around since 1966 when West Fraser's CaberMDF was introduced to the building market. It can be sawn, drilled, shaped, and routed cleanly with minimum fuss, using hand or machine tools and looks good as the smooth surface of the panels is ideal for painting, veneers, or paper foils.



Photograph courtesy of Unsplash.

CaberMDF plays hide and seek around the home; it can be an architectural feature, fascia, shelf, fitted unit, wardrobe or kitchen and bathroom doors, drawers and carcasses.

West Fraser's comprehensive five-strong CaberMDF range has been designed to give the specifier options depending on the application. For general use, CaberMDF Trade is a versatile, lightweight board, which is ideal where weight is a factor. CaberMDF Trade MR offers the same benefits but with the added advantage of moisture resistance for wet or humid environments.

Where there is a need for premium quality and detailed working, CaberMDF Pro provides incredibly consistent density, ensuring cutting and routing need minimal finishing. CaberMDF Pro MR offers the further benefit of moisture resistance.

The ultimate product in the range is CaberMDF Industrial which is moisture resistant and designed specifically for the production of high-grade furniture and fittings. It is ideal for deep routing, and its consistent close-grained texture ensures clean edges and surfaces that will take advanced finishing techniques.

The materials and processes used to manufacture the product offer the reassurance of being sustainable. West Fraser's range of board products is available in a wide selection of sizes to minimise waste. All timber used is responsibly sourced and FSC certified and the net carbon negative panels are manufactured in the UK from locally grown timber.

Samples of all West Fraser construction panels can be ordered on the website.

**West Fraser**

Tel 01786 812921 ● [Uk.westfraser.com](http://Uk.westfraser.com)

## CaberShield Eco fact sheet available

**INCORPORATING all the familiar benefits of CaberFloor P5 plus a super resilient protective surface, CaberShield Eco is the new and greenest answer for laying decks in challenging conditions.**

As a manufacturer of panel products using responsibly sourced and certified timber, West Fraser has now published a useful fact sheet outlining the product's highly sustainable credentials: underlining why CaberShield Eco represents the future for weather decking.

As well as listing the major bullet-points, the A4 publication covers the most important technical aspects to the company's highest performing flooring panel, using full colour images; while a standout strapline proclaims, "Keep building even with the roof off". And if the reader is in any doubt about the board being truly weatherproof, West Fraser promises 60 days durability for CaberShield Eco whatever the weather.

The 100 per cent recyclable

panels feature a P5 specification with a solvent-free, single-sided UV-cured resin coating across the top surface. Then for added safety, the durable boards are also made slip-resistant, so are an ideal

platform to specify when working at height – plus they will withstand heavy site traffic, including the stacking of concrete blocks.

As the concise publication informs us, the boards boast all

the inherent practical benefits of CaberFloor P5 when it comes to cutting and fixing while, if installed according to the manufacturer's instructions using CaberFix D4 adhesive, will carry the confidence of the 60-day BBA certificate.

CaberShield ECO sheets are 22 mm thick and supplied in one standard size of 600 x 1200 mm, with a TG4 edge profile. As the title on the leaflet states, they are "the greener choice for permanently protected flooring". Plus, for the eventual building-user, their specification will help reduce Scope 3 emissions in comparison to traditional flooring.

All West Fraser panel products produced in the UK are net carbon negative and manufactured in mills that have obtained the coveted environmental ISO 14001 accreditation. Responsibly sourced, the panels are FSC certified and created from locally grown timber, cutting the embodied carbon associated with transportation.

**West Fraser**

Tel 01786 812 921

[Uk.westfraser.com](http://Uk.westfraser.com)





# REAL METAL LAMINATES TO ELEVATE EVERY SPACE

Kronospan Brushed Metal HPLs combine real aluminium with premium MDF to deliver strong, durable and tactile metallic surfaces. Available in six contemporary colours, these boards bring stylish visual impact to residential, commercial and hospitality interiors. Easy to machine and ideal for high-traffic environments, boards are supplied in 3050 × 1310mm on 15mm or 18mm MDF. Scan the QR code to order samples or learn more about the collection.



Copper

Inox

Titan

Bronze

Aluminium

Gold

# A panel for all seasons

**CREATING a modern co-working space inside a 16th-century Grade II listed building presents the distinct challenge of delivering impressive contemporary design and preserving priceless historic character.**

It was a delicate balancing act Southspace founder Matt Livey had to achieve if he wanted to deliver on his vision of an all mod cons office for local creatives and freelancers within Dorking's historic Mount House.

Transfixed with birch ply since using it to fit-out his first apartment, he knew he wanted to use it for this project, not only for its visual appeal but also for its adaptability within a heritage setting. After considering a number of premium options, he alighted on Finnish brand WISA, instantly impressed by its long-grain finish and sustainability.

After an initial conversation, the WISA team connected him with their largest UK distributor, James Latham.

## A natural selection

From the outset, the overarching design philosophy was to create a



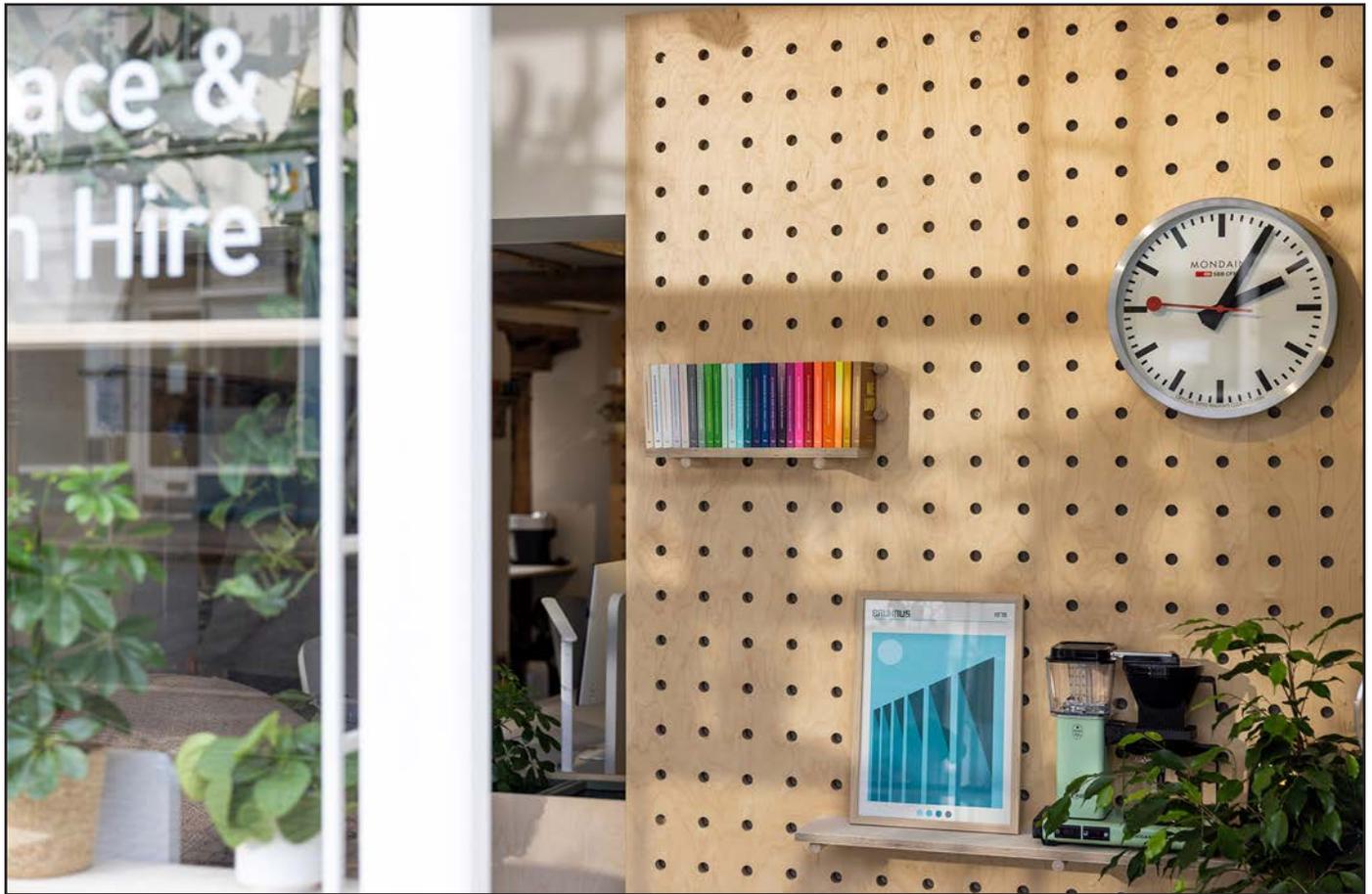
warm and natural look and feel across the entire interior. As Matt explains, "We wanted to use a selection of materials that would sit happily in a historic location and, most importantly, age beautifully. A longtime plywood fan, as soon as I saw WISA-Birch with its striking long grains, I really wanted to have it as the foundation of my material palette. Its influence would go far beyond being background material, driving my colour choices and helping create the tranquil, harmonious atmosphere I was looking for. Oh, and it also finishes beautifully, whether you're using oils, stains or varnishes.

"However, that was only half the story behind the selection," he continues, "Not only is WISA Birch a timelessly beautiful product, it's also dimensionally stable and ages incredibly well, making it perfectly suited for hard-wearing commercial workspaces."

## The long, good ply-day

James Latham's panel team would play a crucial role, selecting and delivering 10 sheets of 18 mm WISA-Birch Long Grain plywood (2,440 mm x 1,220 mm) according to the specification and advising on the best fabrication approaches.

As David Briggs, Birch Plywood expert at James Latham, says, "What sets WISA apart is found in the manufacturing process, where each and every sheet is produced to EN636-2 EN314-2 Class 3 standards, which delivers dependable performance time after time. For a fit-out like this, where uncompromising precision is required, having these third-party reassurances was essential. From a structural point of view, the robust



cross-banding in each panel provides the strength and stability needed for multiple furniture and finishing applications.”

#### A harmonious material palette

All WISA-Birch components used in Southspace were CNC cut locally by fabricators Buzz Productions (with Marcus Etherington engaged for the accompanying metalwork). The versatility of WISA-Birch enabled the installers to create everything from adaptable pegboard systems that provide reconfigurable storage, along with durable, tactile desk surfaces, through to hybrid planter/bookshelves and bespoke window displays.

As an added bonus, and dovetailing with Matt’s desire for visual harmony, WISA-Birch sat comfortably alongside the ToughSphere poured resin floor by Sphere8 and ash-legged chairs by Solidwool, creating a calm, cohesive palette throughout the space.

#### Supporting sustainable specification

With an underlying commitment to low carbon construction, Matt was also impressed by WISA’s green credentials. PEFC certified and manufactured in Europe, it meets E1 formaldehyde emission requirements, ensuring healthy indoor air quality for workspace users.

He also appreciated how, with a premium product like birch ply everything is precious, making use of all the off-cuts and repurposing them across various interior features and fittings. One noteworthy example is a set of bespoke, trapezoid plywood table legs, effortlessly combining both form and functionality.

#### Why Matt Livey will specify WISA-Birch again

Completed and opened to the public in November 2025, Southspace demonstrates how contemporary materials and traditional buildings can work in unison.

The WISA-Birch plywood’s warm, natural appeal complements Mount House’s historic character rather than competing with it.

As Matt Livey concludes, “Southspace captures the true potential of plywood and what can be achieved when you push it to its limits in an unusual space with strict limitations of what you can and cannot do. Beyond the material, James Latham’s support was exceptional, and its panels team provided invaluable insight into how to get the most out of WISA-Birch. I hope to work with them again on future projects.”

James Latham stocks WISA-Birch Premium plywood nationwide across all 12 UK and Ireland depots, backed by technical advice from experienced timber specialists.

**James Latham**

[www.lathamtimber.co.uk](http://www.lathamtimber.co.uk)



# MEDITE SMARTPLY prepares MDF panels for new EU REACH formaldehyde emission restriction

**MEDITE SMARTPLY, a leading engineered wood panel manufacturer, has announced its full transition to the revised EU Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) formaldehyde restriction, known as E05. The updated requirement, introduced under Annex XVII of EU REACH, halves the existing formaldehyde emission threshold for wood-based panels and will come into force for affected products on 6th August 2026.**

The revised limit reduces allowable formaldehyde emissions from the current E1 threshold of 0.124 mg/m<sup>3</sup> to 0.062 mg/m<sup>3</sup> air concentration, designated industry wide as E05. The restriction applies across the EU market to all formaldehyde-emitting products, including medium-density fibreboard (MDF) panels.

From early April 2026, all MEDITE MDF products affected by the restriction will comply with the E05 emission limit. This includes a wide range of panels used across joinery, cabinetry, interior fit-out and construction applications, including MEDITE INDUSTRIAL MR, MEDITE LITE, MEDITE MR, MEDITE MR LITE, MEDITE MR PLUS, MEDITE PREMIER and MEDITE PREMIER FR.

Products manufactured using no added formaldehyde MDI resins — including MEDITE TRICOYA EXTREME, MEDITE EXTERIOR, MEDITE CLEAR and MEDITE VENT — already meet the stricter emission limit and are not subject to additional transition requirements.



*MTX Door, Crafted by Kells Konic Doors.*

Formaldehyde is a naturally occurring volatile organic compound present in all wood products at very low levels and is widely used in resin binders during panel manufacture to deliver strength, durability and machining performance. Under the revised REACH requirement, manufacturers must ensure that formaldehyde emissions from wood-based panels meet the stricter E05 limit before products are placed on the EU market.

Formaldehyde emissions will continue to be verified using the

EN717-1 chamber test method, as recommended by the European Chemicals Agency for wood-based panels, with test reports available on request and able to be shared through the supply chain, provided panels are not altered with additional layers or coatings that could affect formaldehyde content. Updated Declarations of Performance, safety data sheets and product datasheets confirming E05 compliance will be issued as part of the transition, and while Construction Product Regulation markings will continue to refer-

ence E1 for CPR purposes, supporting documentation will confirm alignment with the revised EU REACH requirement where applicable. "We've been preparing for the revised EU REACH restriction for some time," says Guillaume Coste, technical services manager at MEDITE SMARTPLY. "We have been investing in testing and production readiness so that customers can expect the same dependable performance from MEDITE MDF as the industry moves to the lower E05 threshold. While compliance is changing, the standards our customers expect from the board are not."

Although the REACH revision is an EU requirement and does not directly alter Great Britain's product regulation, MEDITE's transition ensures continued access to the EU market for exporters. The restriction will also apply in Northern Ireland under ongoing alignment with relevant EU chemical regulation.

To support customers and specifiers, MEDITE SMARTPLY will be hosting a series of technical webinars to provide further clarity on the revised requirement and its practical implications.

**MEDITE SMARTPLY**  
<https://mdfosb.com/en/eu-reach-revision>



*MTX Garden Room, Crafted by Bakers Garde Buildings.*

# Worsening weather underlines the benefits of CaberShield Eco from West Fraser



**A GROWING number of building contractors, and especially timber frame erection specialists, are making use of the weather protected panel products within the West Fraser range, allowing them to carry on working effectively despite increasingly wet winters and even the more frequent tropical-like downpours of the summer.**

The newest addition to West Fraser's range is CaberShield Eco, which is the company's latest eco-friendly option for creating high specification, waterproof floors on residential and commercial as well as refurbishment schemes. Offering, at the same time, a slip resistant, safe working platform, this green decking is able to shelter and protect the spaces below from the worst the British weather can throw at it, enabling work to proceed while the roof and building envelope are being made fully weathertight.

The product's BBA Certificate confirms an impressive 60 days endurance, thanks to the inherent performance characteristics of the CaberFloor P5 being further boosted by the solvent-free, UV-cured resin waterproof coating across the upper surface to CaberShield Eco.

The consistent high quality of the boards makes them resistant to accidental damage during manual handling, while the excellent dimensional accuracy ensures there is no creep in alignment as they are secured in place. They also cut easily with no tendency to clog up electric saws as occurs with some of the film coated competition. Ultimately, the practical benefits to CaberShield Eco translate into improved productivity and cost savings in any conditions.

Measuring 2,400 mm long by 600 mm wide installed — with a 22 mm thick T&G version avail-

able — the FSC and CE certified panels are ideal for humid environments, and even more so able to withstand rain and snow, while the UV-coated finish also protects against photodegradation. West Fraser recommends securing them using its tried and tested CaberFix D4, a solvent-free, one-component polyurethane adhesive. When applied to the edges, CaberFix D4 has the advantage of eliminating those irritating creaks and squeaks which characterise traditional floorboards. The West Fraser range also includes rugged tape to further protect the interfaces once laid.

In common with other products in the West Fraser range, CaberShield Eco is produced using timber from responsibly managed forest sources, locking in the CO<sub>2</sub> during its lifetime; while architects, builders and other specifiers can further minimise waste

through careful project planning and specification decisions. Then at the end of life the panels are also 100% recyclable, while the fact that West Fraser utilises wood from trees grown in the UK cuts embodied carbon as well as ensuring the security of the supply chain in a global market where European wide deforestation regulations (EUDR) are coming under increasing scrutiny.

All West Fraser panel products produced in the UK are net carbon negative and manufactured in mills that have obtained the coveted environmental ISO 14001 accreditation. Responsibly sourced, the panels are FSC® certified (C012533) and created from locally grown timber, cutting embodied carbon from transportation.

**West Fraser**  
**01786 812 921**  
<https://uk.westfraser.com/>

# *Bushboard unveils refreshed Omega range to strengthen retail proposition*



*Shaker Classic Walnut*



*Walnut Classic Cassata*

**BUSHBOARD**, a UK manufacturer of innovative kitchen and bathroom surfaces, has unveiled a refreshed identity for its long-established Omega range, reaffirming its commitment to delivering trusted, design-led work-top solutions to the retail sector.

As part of Wilsonart UK, a market leading laminate engineered surfaces designer and supplier, Bushboard's relaunch of Omega will provide retail partners with a compelling new collection to support customers seeking more luxurious kitchen finishes.

The refreshed Omega range from Bushboard is centred around three core collections. Its Sleek 22 mm square edge collection includes seven design-led marble and stone inspired



### Shaker Linen Minos Stone

decors, which offers homeowners a stunning yet low-maintenance alternative to quartz. The Modern collection is a thoughtfully curated selection of eighteen sophisticated wood, marble and stone decors, all available with a modern 38 mm square edge profile. Completing the range is the Classic collection, which offers consumers a range of sixteen 38 mm postformed surfaces, which have been designed for timeless kitchens demanding beauty, practicality and performance; choose from a choice of wood, marble and stone decors.

Omega's updated branding and breadth of product formats, which include splashbacks, upstands and breakfast bar surfaces in addition to worktops, further underpins the company's steadfast reputation for quality craftsmanship and innovation.

To further strengthen the refreshed Omega product range, the Bushboard team has curated a sophisticated new visual identity which spans brochures, lifestyle imagery and POS materials. All which has been thoughtfully developed to elevate the range at retail, create consumer engagement and support showrooms in designing dream kitchens for their discerning customers with ease.

"As we mark our 90th anniversary,

we're proud to reflect on the legacy of creativity and customer service that has made Bushboard a trusted name in work surface solutions," explains Nick Jones, director worktops EMEA at Bushboard. "We are continually looking to evolve and embrace new technologies and trends, and this relaunch of the Omega brand is an excellent example of this approach in action. Through this up-

dated range launch, we are confident Bushboard will remain the go-to choice for retailers looking to provide customers with reliable surface solutions they'll trust and love."

With a wide choice of decors including wood, marbles and stones, which are available in both modern square edge and traditional postformed profiles, Omega presents customers with

a gorgeous range of refined surfaces for signature spaces. Both eye-catching and built to endure the demanding kitchen environment, all product formats within the collection are low maintenance, stain resistant, feature antibacterial protection and boast a lifetime guarantee.

### Bushboard

<https://www.bushboard.co.uk/product-overview-omega>



### Moody Blue Modern White Quartz

*Stripes  
Collection from  
Decorative  
Panels:  
a vertically  
fluted addition  
to the dp-  
specialist range*



## SURFACES

**DECORATIVE PANELS** has introduced **Stripes**, a new vertically fluted surface collection developed in collaboration with **Surteco**. Available through **Decorative Panels Lamination**, the range expands the **dp-specialist portfolio** with a contemporary textured surface designed for modern interior applications.

At the core of the **Stripes** collection is a precisely engineered fluted texture, enhanced with a super-matt finish. The result is a surface that delivers architectural depth while maintaining a clean, minimalist aesthetic. Suitable for residential, commercial and hospitality environments, **Stripes** offers designers and manufacturers a way to introduce structure and visual interest into interior schemes.

### Engineered for modern living

The surface has been developed by **Surteco**, a global leader in decorative surface design known for its high performance solutions. Lamination is carried out in-house at **Decorative Panels**, ensuring consistent quality and finish.

**Stripes** panels are available laminated to **MDF** or **dp-lite** substrate in a 1,220 mm width. Options include single-sided lamination with a matching reverse or double-sided lamination, offering flexibility for both aesthetic and structural requirements. The collection is suitable



for furniture, cabinetry, wall panelling and retail fixtures.

### A curated colour palette

The **Stripes** collection is available in four contemporary colours:

- **Reed Green** — a muted, nature inspired tone suited to biophilic interiors
- **Soft Black** — a deep, refined shade for dramatic contrasts
- **Cashmere** — a warm neutral offering versatility across schemes
- **Porcelain White** — a clean, crisp option for light, modern spaces

Each colour has been selected to integrate easily within broader interior palettes.

### Designed for seamless integration

Matching **Surteco** edgebanding is available from UK stock with next-day delivery, supporting efficient fabrication and visual consistency. Board matches from **Egger** and **Kronospan** further simplify coordination with commonly specified materials. With its tactile finish, considered colour range and practical compatibility, **Stripes** provides a versatile surface solution for contemporary interior design projects.

### Decorative Panels

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# Blackheath Products partners with Polyrey to strengthen UK Decorative Laminate Distribution

**BLACKHEATH Products** has partnered with **Polyrey**, a **Wilsonart** brand, to strengthen its UK distribution of premium decorative laminates and further enhance its portfolio of engineered surfaces.

A leading trade-only supplier with a UK-wide distribution network, Blackheath Products provides worktops and decorative surfaces to the construction and furniture sectors, including shop fitters, exhibition contractors, laminate fabricators, kitchen manufacturers, builders' merchants and kitchen and bathroom retailers. Its new partnership with Polyrey will allow the Midlands-based distributor to stock Polyrey's extensive range of high-pressure laminate (HPL) products to commercial customers across the country.

"We already have over 65 years of trading experience as a quality, specialist laminate distributor and very much see ourselves as continuing to develop that legacy," says Mark Murphy, managing director at Blackheath Products. "For us, this new partnership with Polyrey completes the circle — we'd already had a relationship with the Wilsonart team, but being able to provide HPL with



the Polyrey name means we can further bolster our commitment to delivering a market-leading breadth of decorative surfaces and exceptional service.

"This partnership undoubtedly strengthens our ability to swiftly provide our customers with premium decorative laminates for commercial applications. We're very excited about this opportunity — in an industry where

product availability is critical, this partnership will strengthen both brands going forward."

Polyrey is a global leader in engineered surfaces and a trusted name among architecture and design professionals. Its collections, including the acclaimed Galerie range, offer hundreds of designs and finishes that combine aesthetic appeal with technical performance. By partnering

with Blackheath Products, Polyrey will further ensure its products are readily available for commercial projects across the UK upon specification.

"The specification process can take months or even years, and too often projects are delayed or fall through due to lack of product availability," said George Emms, Specification Leader at Polyrey. "Blackheath's expertise in laminate distribution and its ability to deliver nationwide coverage means our customers can rely on getting the right product at the right time.

"I've been in this industry for over 30 years, and Blackheath Products has always been among the premier laminate distributors because the business is renowned for offering a fantastic range of products with a service customers can always count on. We look forward to working together in the coming months and years and playing our part in the success of countless projects along the way."

**Polyrey**  
[en.polyrey.com](http://en.polyrey.com)

**Blackheath Products**  
[www.blackheathproducts.co.uk](http://www.blackheathproducts.co.uk)



# EGGER Decorative Collection 26+

**THE Decorative Collection 26+ is here, with an updated range of timeless decors, functional wood-based products, and optimised digital services to streamline your projects. The collection at a glance:**

- Over 360 new decor and texture combinations.
- 220 decors for decorative boards in matching materials: 18 new decors, including in the on-trend beige colour range as well as new wood reproductions with a linear look.
- 65 PerfectSense decor/texture combinations: 10 new decors, a harmonised colour concept with 25 uni decors and the improved surface quality of the lacquered uni decors on particleboard core.
- PerfectSense Ambiance product innovation emulating luxurious marble and granite surfaces.
- 85 worktop decor/texture combinations: 12 new introductions and a new edged worktop model with a thickness of 20 mm.
- Newly developed surface: the all-over wood pore ST17 Omnipore Oiled with a very low glossy level.
- Four new decors in landscape format in the laminates product range in door sizes.
- 18 new decors in the edging range, including four in the accent edging segment.

## Innovation — PerfectSense® Ambiance

Uniquely combining the velvet-matt touch of the PerfectSense matt ranges with striking elements of mirror-like gloss, PerfectSense Ambiance emulates luxurious marble and granite surfaces with unprecedented realism.

The advanced material development also features a synchronised surface texture, aligning the intricate print with tactile depth for an extremely authentic look and feel.

## Space for impressive surfaces

Setting new standards in the reproduction of natural wood effects for large-scale applications, the collection introduces a new, repeatless decor, H1316 ST17 Bookmatch Oak. Replicating the aesthetics of real wood veneer,



the decor makes the look industry reproducible with more ease, less labour, and less impact on budget.

The carefully designed decor print of each panel perfectly emulates the appearance of true wood veneer layers, while removing the traditionally manual process of joining layers together in a 'book-matched', authentic veneer effect.

The considered decor includes a grain pattern of 3,000 mm, meaning that repetition of the visual design only occurs at approximately every 17th panel, heightening visual realism.

This makes large surface areas of authentic-looking, repeatless woodgrain aesthetic possible, for unrivalled design freedom.

The new repeatless decor was honoured with the Red Dot Award 2025 for "High Design Quality" and with the Interzum Award 2025 for "High Product Quality".

## High performance surface solutions

For perfect harmony between look and feel, developments in wood effect designs require the same advances in texture.

In H1316 ST17 Bookmatch Oak, as well as in new linear, Italian-inspired woodgrains, surfaces offer an increased look of authenticity with new texture development ST17 Omnipore Oiled, the latest

generation of an all-over wood pore.

ST17 Omnipore Oiled combines a subtle microtexture with an impressively low gloss level, creating an all-over matt appearance even within the wood pore. Combined with carefully selected decors, the result perfectly emulates an elegant, oiled wood surface.

With the Decorative Collection 26+, the company has improved the surface quality of its matt-lacquered, solid colour decors on a recyclable particleboard core, PerfectSense Lacquered Chipboard. Formerly known as texture "TM9 PerfectSense Smoothtouch Matt", the finish evolves to "TM PerfectSense Matt" and offers a smoother surface and improved aesthetic, without compromising on its functional properties.

## Colour

The Decorative Collection 26+ offers striking new shades for matt design concepts that are both beautiful and functional. From rich berry tones to bold blues and sophisticated caramels, the perfect matt aesthetic is available for your projects.

The colours are offered in upgraded PerfectSense Lacquered Chipboard TM, for vertical application in furniture and frontals, and in versatile PerfectSense Matt Laminate PM, an ideal solution for curved surfaces and high traffic

applications in commercial interiors. This means a consistent look and feel can be achieved across multiple interior surfaces, optimising the opportunities to control budget on your projects.

Beige tones are a perfect choice to create welcoming interiors with an atmosphere of warmth and softness, combining effortlessly with many materials. In living spaces for example, its softness is commonly reflected in fabrics, woods, stones and wall colours. The trend has its roots in textiles and paper, where unbleached variants are increasingly being used.

Thanks to its balanced neutrality in the warmer colour range, beige complements almost any other colour and can be combined in multiple ways. As a solid colour or stone reproduction, beige tones provide visually harmonious softness. Linear Italian style woods are an elegant combination choice, ensuring a high-quality look. The softness of beige also means tone-on-tone combinations are simply achieved. Warm metallic decor F579 ST20 Champagne Crossed Metal, new for the Decorative Collection 26+, fits perfectly into this colour scheme for effortless pairing with beige.

**EGGER**  
[www.egger.com/en/](http://www.egger.com/en/)