

PANEL, WOOD & *Solid Surface*

Issue No. 215/216

April/May 2026

Bushboard unveils refreshed Options kitchen worktops range

Turn to pages 42-43 for the full story



News: pp 3-15 ● Exhibitions: pp 16-25 ● Finishes: pp 25-27

Education & Training: pp 28-30 ● Software: pp 31-34 ● Panels & Surfaces: pp 34-38

Design & Innovation: pp 39-43 ● Flooring: p 44 ● Sustainable Development: pp 45-50

INDUSTRIAL EXTRACTION SYSTEM DESIGN & INSTALLATION



Contact us today
for a free consultation!

01924 520462
info@extractly.co.uk

Scan to
visit our
website



Clean Air Safer Workplaces Healthier Teams

Protect your workforce with high-performance Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV) solutions. We design, install, and maintain efficient dust and fume extraction systems for a safer, cleaner environment.

- ✓ Dust & Fume Extraction Systems
- ✓ Ductwork Design & Installation
- ✓ Ecogate Energy-Saving Systems
- ✓ Spray Booths & Enclosures
- ✓ LEV Testing & Maintenance
- ✓ Shredding & Briquetting
- ✓ Control Panel Design
- ✓ Servicing Contracts



LEV... **extractly** as it should be

MKM opens a new branch in Luton

MKM BUILDING Supplies, a leading UK independent builders' merchant, opened its 143rd branch in Luton on Monday 30 March. The new branch created 18 new jobs for local people and brought MKM's independent, customer-first approach to one of the busiest merchanting areas in the region.

MKM Luton gives local trades and homeowners access to a modern, well-stocked builders' merchant run by experienced local staff who understand the area and the needs of customers working across Luton and the surrounding towns.

Dan Mansfield, branch development director at MKM Building Supplies, said the new branch reflects the company's focus on local knowledge, experienced teams and straightforward service. "Luton has a really strong trade community and a huge amount of building activity, so it's a brilliant place for a new MKM branch. The team we've brought together know the town well and have worked in and around the area for many years. That local experience is important because it helps us shape the branch around what customers need."

The Luton branch offers a full range of building materials, alongside dedicated plumbing and heating facilities and kitchens and bathrooms, giving customers access to both structural materials and finishing products in one place.

A large warehouse space

means timber and key materials will be stored under cover, keeping products dry and ready to use on site.

Dan explained that listening to customers is a key part of how MKM branches operate.

"Our teams are encouraged to speak to customers every day about what they're using on site and what they want to see stocked locally. If trades are asking for something, we look at bringing it in. That approach means the branch evolves around the jobs happening in the area."

The branch will stock a range of trusted industry brands including Kingspan, Siniat, Marshalls and leading timber suppliers, alongside a wide range of plumbing and heating products and kitchen and bathroom solutions.

The branch opened with a team bringing many years of combined experience across the building trade and merchanting sector, including backgrounds in construction, sales and merchanting. Dan said that experience makes a real difference on the trade counter. "Customers want knowledgeable people behind the counter who understand the job and can help them find the right solution quickly. The team here have worked across the trade for years and that experience shows when customers walk through the door."

Trade customers can expect friendly service, strong stock availability and free delivery across the local area, with same day delivery



available where possible to help keep jobs running smoothly.

Dan said: "One of the things that stands out about Luton is the diversity of the community. People from all over the world live and work here and that brings a lot of energy to the town and the local trade. As with every MKM branch, the team are keen to become a key part of the communi-

ty, supporting local initiatives and building long-term relationships with customers and businesses in the area."

Dan added: "We're really looking forward to opening. Good people, good stock and a branch that's here to help the local trade get the job done."

MKM
mkm.com

GERRY LYNCH WOODWORKING MACHINERY



Mainly Used Machinery for Solid Wood and Panel Production
OVER 60 YEARS OF WOODWORKING MACHINERY

FOR SALE in excellent condition



Marinus V & G 400 End Matching machine
c/w Conveyor Belt

Friulmac Randomat-E End Matching machine c/w Infeed and Outfeed Conveyor with Acoustic Sound & Safety Enclosure

SCM Record 132 TVN CNC Machine Centre 2004, currently running software for staircase production

SCM RT 110 NTTVN CNC Machine Centre 2008 currently running software for staircase production

SCM DMC Technosand Heavy Duty 1350m/m wide Triple Roller Wide Belt Sander.

SCM DMC Technosand Heavy Duty 1350m/m wide Double Roller Wide Belt Sander.

Weinig H30N, Capacity 300 x 150m/m. Heavy Duty Moulder with 6 Heads c/w Sound & Safety Enclosure and Hydrolock Tooling.

Weinig Unimat 23 AL Moulder, Capacity 230 x 120m/m with 9 Heads c/w Safety Hoods and Sound & Safety Enclosure.

For more details contact:
Gerry Lynch on **07860 359382**
or email: gerry.lynch@talk21.com

Panel, Wood & Solid Surface

is published by

Pawprint Publishing Ltd

121 Warren Drive
Hornchurch
Essex RM12 4QU

Tel 07913 783510

email info@pawprintuk.co.uk
www.pawprintuk.co.uk

© Pawprint Publishing Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior consent of Pawprint Publishing Ltd.

This journal includes editorial photographs provided and paid for by suppliers.

Barnet Council helping local SMEs

BARNET Council's Construction Supply Chain Programme has helped local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) secure £16.9 million in contracts since 2022, strengthening the borough's local economy and supporting jobs and skills.

Since launching, the programme has supported 145 Barnet based construction SMEs, with 28 businesses successfully winning 47 contracts with developers operating in the borough, as well as from the council and Barnet Homes.

The initiative connects local suppliers with major regeneration and development projects taking place across Barnet, helping ensure investment in new homes and infrastructure benefits local businesses and communities.

With significant regeneration continuing across Barnet, the council is committed to supporting more local construction businesses to access and win future tender opportunities.

The programme supports local SMEs through regular Meet-



the-Buyer events and practical workshops, as well as one-to-one business support and guidance to help them understand the procurement process and write effective bids.

Phil Hallworth, business development manager at Crystal Glass Units Ltd, said: "Barnet Construction Supply Chain played

an invaluable role in helping us land a contract to provide all the windows on a large development in Cricklewood. The council's approach to engaging local suppliers is opening up opportunities on development sites across the borough for businesses like ours."

Cllr Ella Rose, Barnet's Small Business Champion, said: "This

programme ensured that investment in Barnet directly benefits local businesses and residents. By helping our SMEs access these construction opportunities, we are supporting local jobs and long-term economic growth across the borough."

London Borough of Barnet
barnetconstructionsupplychain.net

The new Makita combi drill delivers power that hits harder

MAKITA'S new HP003GZ01 40VMax XGT® Brushless Combi Drill combines robust performance, intelligent technology and rugged durability to deliver professional results. Powered by Makita's advanced 40VMax XGT® Li-Ion battery platform, this high-torque combi drill is designed for demanding screwdriving and drilling applications.

The new HP003GZ01 combines power with smart control features, and delivers up to 180 Nm torque, making it the most powerful Combi Drill in the Makita range.

With torque setting stages of 41/30/25 Nm and enhanced clutch control, users enjoy greater accuracy, and the HP003G XGT 40V Combi features a versatile three-speed gearbox that adapts effortlessly to demanding drilling and fastening tasks across various materials and applications. Furthermore, the tool includes a new medium mode, twice as high operating speed as that in the low mode, which provides the ideal balance of torque and speed for heavy duty tasks, such as driving longer screws.



For added safety, the drill includes active feedback sensing technology (AFT) that immediately stops the engine if the rotation suddenly cuts out, which also improves the tool's longevity, as well as an electric brake for maximum productivity and increased operator protection.

Additionally, it has a soft start and reversing function that helps to reduce kick back.

It also includes a built-in LED light to illuminate dark areas, a conveniently placed reversing switch and a 13 mm keyless chuck for easy bit changes without the need for additional tools.

Kevin Brannigan, marketing manager at Makita commented: "Our HP003GZ01 combi drill is a great addition to any professional's toolkit. Compatible with Makita's

40VMax batteries, the drill offers longer run time whilst delivering robust performance and precise control."

Makita ● www.makita.com

Tripling in size for Travis Perkins branch

AN EAST LONDON branch of a leading UK builders' merchant has tripled in size following its relocation, further expanding its offering to local tradespeople.

Travis Perkins has opened its new Leytonstone branch on Joseph Ray Road, having made the two-and-a-half-mile switch from its previous home in Stratford on Rick Roberts Way.

The new branch is an impressive near-three acres in size — more than three times as big as

its previous location — and also includes a brand new Benchmarx Kitchens & Joinery showroom, as well as an expanded Hire service.

Travis Perkins Leytonstone offers tradespeople a large landscaping range, as well as all heavyside and lightside products. This includes a wide range of timber, insulation, aggregates, bricks and blocks.

Daniel McCafferty, regional director at Travis Perkins, said: "At our previous location in Stratford

we were a popular branch, but the move to this new site opens a much greater opportunity to service tradespeople in the heart of East London.

"The increase in space means the quantity and variety of products we have on site give our customers a fantastic choice, as well as adding a brand new Benchmarx Kitchens showroom, which now makes us the perfect place for tradespeople to get all their essential materials all under one roof.

"The dedicated team from the previous branch have all moved over, as well as creating new positions to take us to a team of 34, and our excellent colleagues will continue to provide the outstanding customer service that Travis Perkins is well known for."

The branch is open from 7 am-5 pm Monday to Friday and 8 am-12 pm on a Saturday. The new Benchmarx showroom is open from 7.30 am-5 pm on weekdays and 8 am-12 pm on a Saturday.

Daniel Rossiter, branch manager of Travis Perkins Leytonstone,

said: "With the size of the new location, it has allowed us to stock a huge range of products in great quantities to cater for the needs of all local tradespeople, whatever the scale and size of their jobs.

"It makes us the perfect partner for local tradespeople."

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

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 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



LG 21H & CHHF

PRECISE, ROBUST, EFFICIENT



Saw blade servicing and repair has just got easier with VOLLMER. To guarantee carbide-tipped circular saw blades retain optimum cutting performance, missing teeth must be replaced and faults repaired. To address this service requirement, VOLLMER now presents the perfect solution with the LG brazing unit and the CHHF side grinder – the most formidable partnership in saw blade service and repair!

www.vollmer-group.com

Resources for architects from West Fraser

WEST FRASER, one of the world's leading manufacturers of engineered woodbased panel products, continues to strengthen support for architects through its high performance, sustainably produced OSB, particleboard, and MDF solutions. These products, trusted across the UK construction sector, are designed to help architects meet modern building demands, enhance design flexibility, and achieve essential sustainability goals.

At the core of West Fraser's offering is its commitment to net carbon negative engineered wood panels, meaning the products lock in more carbon than is emitted in their manufacture. This provides architects with a powerful tool for supporting low carbon construction, helping the wider industry align with the UK's net-zero objectives.

All timber used in West Fraser's European manufacturing facilities is sourced from responsibly managed forests and certified to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards, offering architects both environmental credibility and peace of mind when specifying materials.

West Fraser's products play an essential role across architectural applications including structural framing, roofing, flooring, interior joinery, and decorative solutions. Timber-based construction delivers multiple advantages for architects:

- Faster build times — timber frame construction can be up to 30% faster than traditional masonry.
- Reduced embodied energy — timber requires less energy to produce than alternative materials and naturally provides high insulation performance.
- Design versatility — products such as SterlingOSB Zero, CaberFloor,



and CaberMDF are precision engineered to meet structural, aesthetic, and regulatory needs across diverse project types.

Architects have trusted West Fraser products for over 40 years due to their quality, reliability, and industry-leading certifications — including UKCA/CE markings and compliance with UK building specifications.

To advance architectural innovation, West Fraser operates a dedicated Architects' Support Hub, providing:

- CPD materials
- BIM objects
- Detailed product datasheets
- Lifecycle assessments
- Case studies
- Free A5 product samples

This hub was created in response to growing interest from architects in sustainable materials and accessible technical guidance. In addition, architects rely on West Fraser's consistency and high manufacturing standards to avoid

the risks associated with substandard, imported alternatives. Each board is engineered for performance, meeting rigorous standards such as:

- BS EN 300 / BS 5268-2 and Eurocode 5 (OSB)
- BS EN 312 (P5) (particleboard)
- BS EN 622 parts 1 and 5 (MDF)

These standards help safeguard structural integrity, sustainability credentials, and project longevity. West Fraser also supports architectural creativity through its longrunning RIBA SterlingOSB Zero design competition. The competition celebrates innovative uses of engineered wood panels and attracts submissions from leading architectural practices across the UK.

West Fraser ● 01786 812921 ● uk.westfraser.com

Two new LXT combo kits from Makita

MAKITA has expanded its advanced cordless range with the introduction of two new high performance combo kits, the DLX3193TJ and the DLX4195JX1. Designed to give trade professionals greater productivity and value, the two sets combine Makita's industry leading LXT 18V technology with a selection of powerful tools, supplied in convenient carry cases. Offering versatility, reliability and long runtimes, both provide an efficient solution for users looking to expand their tools.

The Makita DLX3193TJ 18 V 3pc cordless kit is designed for tradespeople who require reliable performance across trimming, planing and drilling applications. Supplied in a Makpac Type 4 carry case, the kit includes two BL1850B 5.0 Ah lithium-ion batteries and a DC 18 RC Rapid Charger, along with three efficient power tools, starting with the DHP490 Combi Drill. Ideal for demanding drilling and fastening tasks, the combi drill is equipped with a powerful brushless motor to ensure a high torque output of 65Nm, whilst remaining compact. Additionally, the tool offers variable speed control for precise operation.

Also included is the DKP181 Planer, which has an 82 mm planing width and up to 3 mm cutting depth, which can be easily adjusted, as well as an electric brake for maximum productivity and operator safety. Another addition is the DRT50 Router Trimmer, that offers adjustable speed control from 10,000-30,000 rpm and a soft start up feature for better accuracy.



Alternatively, the DLX4195JX1 18 V LXT 4pc Combo Kit includes three 5.0 Ah batteries, a fast charger, two Makpac stacking cases for easy portability, and four high-performance brushless tools.

Featured is the DHP489 Combi Drill, which provides excellent drilling capacity, effortlessly driving a 1-inch ship auger bit through two pieces of lumber in high-speed mode. It also has a robust keyless drill chuck with a single metal sleeve and a metal gear housing for added strength. The DTD173 Impact Driver included in the kit features an electronic four stage impact power selector, providing versatile performance and straightforward operation. Its slim and well-balanced body design also enhances user comfort.

Next, the DGA504 Angle Grinder maintains a constant speed under load, automatically adjusting the cutting speed according to the load conditions to ensure optimum performance. Finally, the DHR243 Rotary Hammer has three operator modes for hammering, rotation and a combination of the two, and uses a joint construction believed to be unique to suppress the transmission of vibrations to protect the battery terminals.

Kevin Brannigan, marketing manager at Makita UK, commented: "We are pleased to announce the addition of our two new combo kits to the range. Since both of these kits also include the 5.0 Ah LXT batteries, each tool provides longer runtimes, making them ideal for high-load operations."

Makita UK ● www.makitauk.com

South London Travis Perkins colleague cycles the length of the UK

A SOUTH London Travis Perkins branch manager is set to push his body to the limit when he cycles from one end of the UK to the other to raise money for charity.

Richard Galloway is tackling a mammoth cycling challenge as he takes on the almost 1,000-mile cycle from Land's End to John o'Groats over two weeks to raise money for Alzheimer's Society.

The 59-year-old is a keen cyclist, but he only took up the sport seven years ago and he has only ever cycled on two successive days before.

Richard has been working at Travis Perkins for the last 28 years in various positions and during the challenge, he is hoping to raise a significant amount of money for the business' chosen charity — Alzheimer's Society — supporting a cause close to his heart.

Dementia is the UK's biggest killer and one in three people born today will develop the illness in their lifetime. Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity, providing help and hope to everyone affected.

Richard has seen the impact Alzheimer's has had on those closest to him. His aunt, father-in-law and close friend all suffered from the illness.

Richard said: "Alzheimer's is devastating. I have seen those I am closest to, who have done so many things in their lives, suffer from the disease and it is heart-breaking to see.

"That is one of the reasons I want to do this, to hopefully raise as much money as possible for Alzheimer's Society to support the great work they do.

"I took up cycling seven years ago and the challenge of going from Land's End to John o'Groats has always been something I have thought about doing, but to do it and raise money at the same time is a win-win."

Richard is set to cycle between 60 and 80 miles each day for the two-week period, with steep inclines also involved at various stages.

The branch manager has been

training for the last month, and he has admitted he is nervous ahead of the task, which he starts at the end of May.

Richard added: "While I am looking forward to the challenge, this is something I have never done before and I am a bit apprehensive about it.

"I have never cycled for more than two days back-to-back, so I am going to be putting myself out of my comfort zone, but it will all be worth it."

Alzheimer's Society corporate account manager Hannah Pennock said: "We are so grateful that Travis Perkins have chosen to support Alzheimer's Society. Each hour people like Richard generously give to fundraise for us, every event they take part in, every pound they donate, they're making a life-changing difference to people living with dementia.

"Alzheimer's Society provides vital support to people living with dementia, funds groundbreaking research and campaigns to make dementia the priority it should be. It will take a society to beat dementia.

"There are around a million people living with dementia in the UK including 32,900 in South London. We all have a role to play in ending the devastation dementia causes. We simply can't reach everyone who needs us without the continued support of our incredible fundraisers like Travis Perkins."

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 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



Richard Galloway.

www.sagetechnology.co.uk





**MACHINES
UPTO**
3m x 2m,
50mm max
cutting depth



0191 367 0267



ALWAYS
INNOVATING



MADE IN
BRITAIN



QUALITY
COMMITMENT

0191 367 0267
hello@sagetechnology.co.uk
www.sagetechnology.co.uk







Celebrating the National Year of Reading



WEST FRASER is proud to support the 2026 National Year of Reading, a major Department for Education initiative delivered with the National Literacy Trust, aimed at reversing the decline in reading enjoyment and inspiring audiences of all ages to “Go All In” on reading throughout the year. The national campaign seeks to reconnect people with the joy of reading through schools, libraries, community events and partnerships across the UK.

As reading for pleasure reaches its lowest point in two decades, with only one in three children aged 8-18 reporting that they enjoy reading in their free time (National Literacy Trust), this national movement arrives at a crucial moment.

Championing reading through design: The RIBA/J West Fraser Storyboard competition

In recognition of the vital role of stories in inspiring young — and old — imaginations, West Fraser continues its longstanding partnership with RIBA Journal through the annual RIBA/J West Fraser Storyboard competition. This year’s brief challenges architects and designers to create a mobile storytelling centre — a demountable structure under 400 m² that brings the joy of reading and listening to children across the UK. The competition highlights the transformative power of storytelling, both written and spoken. From main theatrical spaces for shared story experiences to integrated reading nooks and café areas, the competition invites entrants to imagine new spaces that encourage communities to gather, listen, and discover stories together.

West Fraser’s partnership with RIBA Journal began over a decade ago, and annual challenges have consistently showcased inventive uses of SterlingOSB Zero, inspiring architects to explore new structural and social possibilities using sustainable materials. By supporting the Storyboard competition, West Fraser aligns its commitment to sustainable design with a broader social mission: nurturing a love of books, stories and imagination among young people at a time when literacy is at risk.

West Fraser ● 01786 812921 ● <https://uk.westfraser.com/>

Travis Perkins raises £3K for charity

MORE THAN one hundred Travis Perkins colleagues and customers hit the bullseye by raising money for charity alongside two legends of darts in Bristol. South West branches of the leading UK builders’ merchant came together to host a charity darts evening which raised more than £3,000 for Alzheimer’s Society, the business’ chosen charity.

Scores of Travis Perkins colleagues and customers descended on the Port of Bristol Sports & Community Hub to take part in a darts competition organised by Leonard Pentland, branch manager at Travis Perkins Bristol Clifton. The evening was compered by ‘The Voice’ of darts, Russ Bray with 1983 World Darts champion Keith Deller MBE taking to the oche on the night.

The event has been running for years, with Leonard having organised more than 20 over the last two decades, raising more than £60,000 for various charities. Teams of four were entered by branches across the region, made up of Travis Perkins colleagues and customers — with the winners going on to take part in the semi-final and then a final.

Leonard said: “Our darts evening was another brilliant night for Travis Perkins colleagues and our customers who came along to join in the fun. We have been organising these events, with the help of Russ Bray and Keith Deller, for the last 20 years or so, and it is a great way for us to raise money for charity. Both colleagues and customers got really into the spirit of the evening, and the atmosphere was absolutely electric. With someone like Russ — whose voice is just iconic within the sport — calling out the numbers, everyone has such a good time.”

The money was raised through ticket sales as well as a raffle on the evening, with the Travis Perkins branches donating materials, while Keith donated a treasured set of darts from his playing days. There was also an auction with a digger and a skip being sold off.

Leonard continued: “The support from the branch managers and the assistants throughout the years has been superb, and it was the same again on this occasion. It has enabled us to raise over £3,000 for Alzheimer’s Society. The auction and raffle were well backed, with everyone being incredibly generous on the evening, and hopefully we can think about organising another one later in the year, as they are that popular.”

Travis Perkins ● www.travisperkins.co.uk



Makita launches head-to-toe workwear range

MAKITA has built a global reputation for tools that perform day in, day out, on demanding work sites. That same practical, performance-first approach now defines the new Makita Workwear range — tough, considered and built for real working environments.

Developed by Castle Clothing — the team behind TuffStuff Workwear — and drawing on over 50 years of industry experience, the head-to-toe collection covers everything from base layers to outerwear, trousers, shorts and safety footwear, including dedicated womenswear sizes. Every piece is designed around the realities of site life: kneeling, climbing, lifting, stretching and working through all conditions.

The difference is in the detail — durable fabrics, high-quality components and smart detailing that improve comfort, flexibility and long-term wearability. Performance features are built in where they matter most:

- CORDURA® reinforcements in high-wear areas
- YKK® zips specified for durability
- Ripstop fabrics for strength without unnecessary bulk
- Durable PFC free water-repellent finishes for reliable weather protection



- Dedicated use of recycled fibres and responsibly sourced 100% BCI cotton
- Work-focused fits designed for movement and all-day comfort

Engineered to the same standards tradespeople expect from Makita tools, the range delivers durability, comfort and technical performance without compromise.

Rob Ansell, managing director at Castle Clothing, said: "Every element of Makita's new workwear range has been developed with trades in mind. They expect their clothing to perform properly on site, and that's exactly what this range is designed to do. The Makita name stands for quality and reliability, and this collection reflects that — tough, practical and built for demanding environments."

Kevin Brannigan, marketing manager at Makita UK, said: "When researching the UK workwear market, we spoke to several well-known workwear brands and conducted further research with our dealers before deciding on a partner who could provide a range of products and service levels that matched the standards that our customers expect from the Makita brand. As a result of intensive market research, the decision to establish a partnership between Makita UK and Castle Clothing soon followed, and we are certain that our dealer and end user customers will appreciate the quality, durability and styling of the new Makita workwear range."

Makita Workwear launches in May 2026 through a network of dedicated trade stockists across the UK.

Makita Workwear
www.makitaukworkwear.com



FMB Member launches first UK-based Neurodiversity platform for building companies

A FEDERATION of Master Builders (FMB) member launched a ground-breaking construction management platform during Neurodiversity Celebration Week (16–22 March), purpose-built for the hundreds of thousands of neurodiverse professionals working in the UK building industry, and FMB members could be the first to use it.

TRADEWAYS Technologies Limited, founded by Louise Tingley, an award-winning, neurodiverse micro-business owner with a background in construction, has developed what is believed to be the first all-in-one construction management platform. It has been designed around the needs of neurodiverse users, including those with ADHD and dyslexia.

The launch comes as industry data shows the scale of the issue with one in four construction workers identifying as having a neurodiverse condition, yet the tools available to run a building business have never been designed with them in mind. Research has found that 52% of UK tradespeople consider themselves neurodiverse, and 59% of UK tradespeople who experience mental ill health are neurodivergent, suggesting that unsuitable working environments and systems are contributing to a wider wellbeing crisis in the sector.

Despite construction attracting a disproportionately high number of neurodiverse professionals, with 34% of neurodiverse workers saying their condition actually heightened their desire to work in construction, almost 40% of neurodiverse construction workers have not disclosed their condition to their employer, with a third of those citing fear of stigma, while many others are simply managing silently, using tools not built for how their brains work.

The platform launched in beta during Neurodiversity Celebration Week (16–22 March), initially hoping to open to FMB members



Louise Tingley.

and industry professionals, before a full public release.

Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders, said: "Construction has always attracted neurodiverse talent as the practical, problem-solving nature of the work suits a huge range of creative-thinking styles. For too long, the administrative side of running a building business has worked against neurodiverse people rather than for them, but Louise has identified something incredibly important. Her new system TRADEWAYS, designed for people in the building industry with neurodiversity, is exactly the kind of innovation the industry needs — built from lived experience and designed with a genuine understanding for people with neuro-diverse needs."

Louise Tingley, founder of

TRADEWAYS Technologies Limited, added: "I spent years fighting my own software. I was spending more time on administration than on the work I loved, getting overwhelmed by platforms that weren't built for the way my brain works, and I knew I couldn't be alone. TRADEWAYS is what I needed and couldn't find. Everything in one place, designed to calm rather than overwhelm, with AI that supports you rather than replaces you. Neurodiversity Celebration Week felt like the right moment to launch because this platform is, at its heart, a celebration of the fact that different brains build brilliant things."

"The TRADEWAYS platform features a dyslexia-friendly font, colour tinted dashboards calibrated to calm rather than overstimulate, and text-to-speech functionality

throughout. AI integration assists with quoting, pricing gap analysis, and tax processes, reducing the administrative burden that many neurodiverse business owners find most overwhelming. The platform is UK-built and UK-specific."

Paul Temple from Maidstone Digital, helping develop the technology said: "It's been genuinely brilliant that myself and the Maidstone Digital team have been part of the TRADEWAYS journey from the ground up. Building the platform here in the UK, and specifically in Kent, means it's rooted in a real understanding of how neurodivergent tradespeople actually work day to day. What makes TRADEWAYS different is that it's not technology for technology's sake — it's being developed hand-in-hand with the industry, focusing on usability, clarity and removing friction rather than adding it. That collaborative, UK-led approach is exactly why the platform has the potential to make a real difference to the construction and trades sector!"

Iain Kirtley, hub director for FMB South, concluded: "Across the South East there is a huge community of skilled, talented tradespeople and a significant number of them are neurodivergent. What Louise has done is fantastic; she's taken an issue that affects so many in our industry and has built a practical and accessible solution which will, I'm sure, benefit many people, especially our FMB members. It's also great that the technology was developed in Kent, further highlighting the innovation and talent that makes the region so special. The FMB is delighted to support the app's development. At the FMB we're also looking to other ways we can support our neurodivergent members, and I encourage any of them to get in touch to share their experiences and help us shape our support."

Federation of Master Builders
www.fmb.org.uk

Travis Perkins helps to rejuvenate West Northamptonshire community space

TRAVIS PERKINS and Travis Perkins Managed Services have revitalised a key area of West Northampton this spring, providing both materials and volunteer support to transform Park Square in Kings Heath.

Located three miles from Northampton's centre, Park Square has long been a vital hub for the community, supported by a local supermarket, pharmacy, and toy library, and is now being transformed into a more vibrant and welcoming space.

Working in partnership with West Northamptonshire Council and dedicated local volunteers, the Travis Perkins Northampton branch on Harvey Reeves Road and the business' Managed Services division donated nearly £3,000 worth of materials to rejuvenate the precinct.

These supplies were used to construct four bespoke raised planters and provide the essential products needed to brighten and refresh the communal area.

The project was completed in several stages, with volunteers from the Travis Perkins Managed Services team working alongside the community to install the flower beds, repaint benches and railings, and create murals to make the square more inviting.

Michelle Smith, social value manager at Travis Perkins Managed Services, said: "We are delighted to support our local community by helping to refresh and revitalise this important shared space. The transformation of Park Square has made it a brighter and more welcoming environment for residents to enjoy. The materials we provided have made a visible impact, with the new greenery from the raised beds bringing fresh life to the precinct.

"Through our conversations with the council, it's clear how committed the community is to maintaining this space, and we are proud to contribute to a project that will have a lasting, positive legacy for everyone in the area."

Anna Thorpe, from West Northamptonshire Council, said: "We are incredibly grateful to Travis Perkins for their generous donation. This has been a community-wide project with help from children from Kings Heath Primary Academy, colleagues from West Northamptonshire Council, the Kings Heath Partnership group, which includes Northamptonshire Partnership Homes, the County Toy Library, local youth groups, and so many more, and of course, Travis Perkins.

"The space looks completely transformed, and it is going to be so much more inviting for residents in the area to spend their time. It will also be of huge impact for the shops within Park Square, which will benefit from a far greater footfall."

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 more than 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



Crane brings craftsmanship home with major new investment



CRANE Garden Buildings has installed a state-of-the-art planer and moulder machine, a Weinig Solid Profile P700, at its Norfolk workshop, marking a significant step forward in its manufacturing capabilities.

The project, which allows timber to be planed and moulded to an exceptionally high standard, has been part-funded by Norfolk County Council through the Business Growth Fund.

The new machine enables the business to further enhance its in-house production and continue investing in quality craftsmanship, improving both precision and efficiency across Crane's range of premium garden buildings. By refining this stage of the process, Crane is able to retain even greater control over the quality of its materials and the finish of every building it produces.

Bringing more of the manu-

facturing process in-house also strengthens Crane's long-standing commitment to British craftsmanship, while supporting skilled employment within its Norfolk based team, with the investment set to create at least two new jobs.

Nick Crane, partner at Crane Garden Buildings, said: "This is a very important step for us as a business. It allows us to have even greater control over the quality of our timber and the precision

of every component we produce.

"We're incredibly grateful for the support from Norfolk County Council, which has helped make this possible. It means we can continue to invest in our workshop, our team and the way we manufacture our buildings here in Norfolk.

"What always sets Crane apart is the care and craftsmanship that goes into every building. This machine enhances that, supporting our skilled team and the work they do every day."

As demand for high-quality, year-round garden buildings continues to grow, the new planer and moulder will also support increased production capacity, ensuring Crane can meet demand while maintaining its exacting standards.

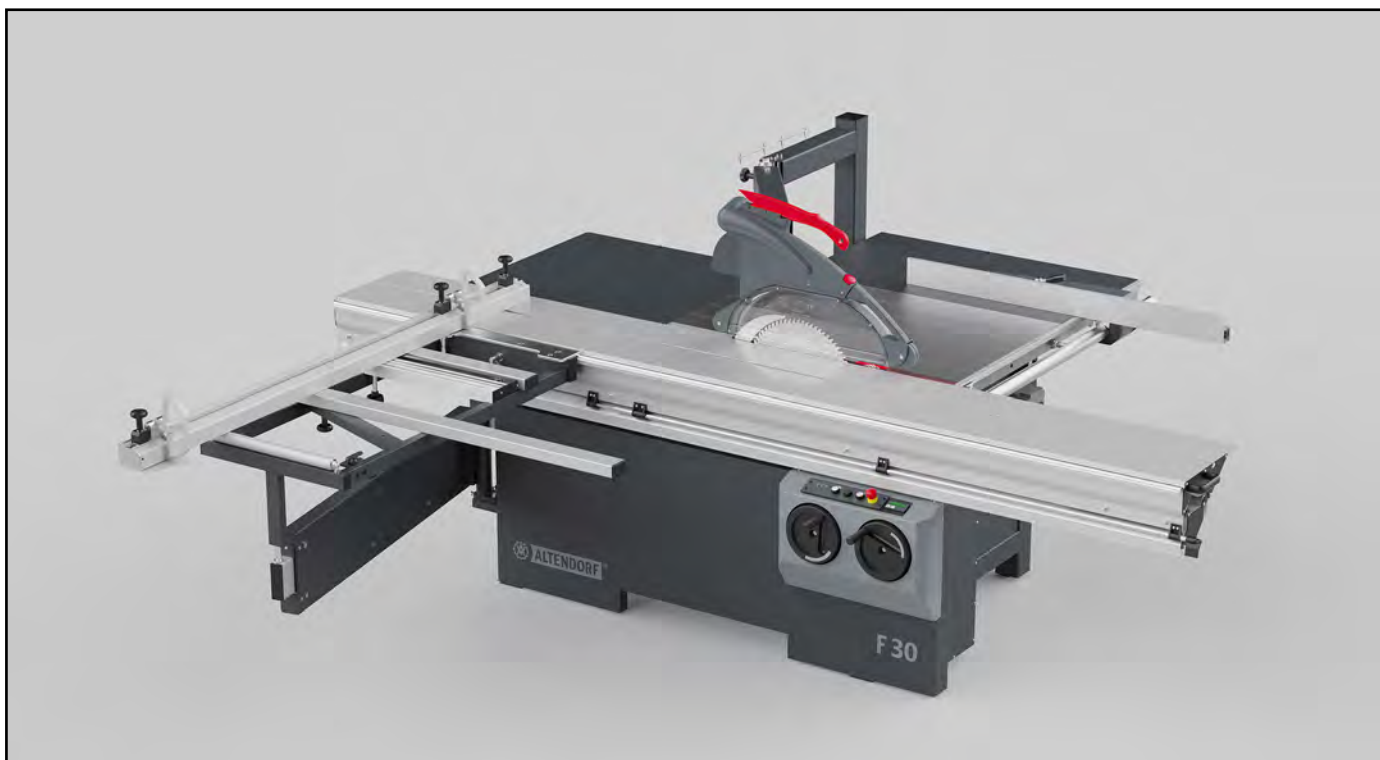
The installation forms part of Crane's ongoing programme of investment in its Norfolk workshop, reinforcing its position as a leading British manufacturer of premium garden buildings.

New Anglia Growth Hub
www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk/business-support/funding-sources/

Crane Garden Buildings
cranegardenbuildings.co.uk



Altendorf presents new F 30 sliding table saw for the trade



WITH THE NEW Altendorf F 30, Altendorf is expanding its portfolio with a powerful sliding table saw for the craftsman segment. The F 30 was developed specifically for businesses that value precision, stability, and clearly structured operation — while also offering an attractive entry point into the world of Altendorf sliding table saws.

As a further development of the proven WA-8/80 series, the F 30 closes the gap between the F 25 and the F 35. It takes familiar workflows and combines them with modern technology, offering a future-proof solution for classic applications in the craft sector.

Robust construction for everyday workshop use

The F 30 is based on a particularly stable, five-sided closed machine stand in a tubular frame construction. The solid machine table made of ribbed cast iron ensures smooth running and consistently precise cutting results — even with intensive use.

The 3,200 mm long double roller carriage, based on the proven Altendorf system, ensures smooth, play-free guidance. An additional hard chrome-plated round bar serves as a precise interface for accessories and supports maximum angle and dimensional accuracy.

Flexible equipment options

The new F 30 is available in several variants — from solid basic equipment to advanced digital functions. Depending on the model, analog or digital displays, motorised adjustments, and CNC-supported stop systems are available. This allows the machine to be specifically adapted to different requirements in craft businesses:

Type 1 is the mechanically focused entry-level solution. With a powerful main motor, three selectable speeds, and an analog cutting width display, it is aimed at businesses that value robust, clearly structured operation.

Type 2 adds digital displays and motorised

adjustments to the equipment. The rip fence with digital cutting width display up to 1,300 mm and an integrated scoring unit enables precise and tear-free cuts — especially with coated panel materials. This variant is therefore suitable for businesses that combine solid wood and panel processing and want to increase their process reliability.

Type 3 offers Altendorf an entry into CNC-supported precision. The electrically driven, CNC controlled rip fence ensures reproducible settings and reduced set-up times. The optional DIGIT L digital length display complements the range of functions and supports exact measurement transfer in series or repeat operation.

Powerful main motors with up to 7.5 kW, three selectable speeds, and the Pro-Lock quick-change tool system ensure efficient work and high productivity. Optionally available scoring units enable clean, tear-free cuts in coated panel materials.

Familiar operation, modern requirements

During the development of the F 30, particular emphasis was placed on clear, ergonomic operating logic. All controls are clearly visible and easily accessible. Depending on the equipment variant, digital displays support precise adjustment and increase operating comfort without losing the familiar character of classic Altendorf machines.

Entering the Altendorf world

With the F 30, Altendorf is specifically targeting craft businesses that are looking for a robust, precise, and versatile sliding table saw — as an entry-level solution or as a replacement for existing machines. The new series stands for the claim to combine proven quality and modern technology in a balanced overall package.

Altendorf
www.altendorf.com/en/



Integrated fire protection from Trotec Laser

WHEN A LASER is at the heart of your business, whether in a small manufacturing facility or a highly automated production line, safety determines availability and economic success. With the Speedy 400, Trotec is introducing the first flatbed laser with an integrated fire protection system that detects and extinguishes fires directly in the processing area. Developed by Trotec Laser with the expertise of Siemens' object fire protection experts, it is currently believed to be unmatched on the market.

Until now, companies had to rely on organisational measures and hope that human error or carelessness on the part of operating personnel would not occur. Whether for single pieces or series production, predictability is the greatest economic lever. Reactions within seconds, close to the machine, reduce the risk of consequential damage and downtime, protecting revenue, delivery commitments, and reputation alike. The new concept from Trotec Laser enables the shift from reactive to proactive protection: detection and extinguishing directly at the source, autonomous, integrated into the machine logic, and without residue — a significant step toward greater safety.

Technological advantage through cooperation

Trotec Laser designed and developed the solution specifically for the requirements of CO₂ flatbed lasers. Siemens contributed its expertise in property fire protection and detection/extinguishing principles. The result: a certified,

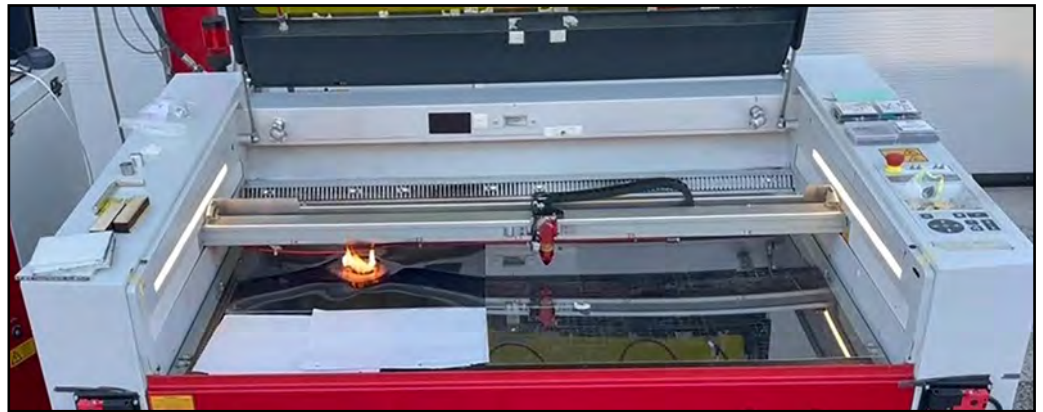
fully embedded system that no other manufacturer currently offers in this form, according to the company.

"Our goal was to give our customers even more security and take flame protection to a new level that safeguards everyday operations in small workshops as well as 24/7 laser production in industry. With the support of Siemens, we were able to achieve a level of safety that fully complies with industry standards," says Trotec Laser.

The laser manufacturer provides a free white paper with more details on this topic. For example, why traditional protection concepts have their limits, for which applications proactive object protection is crucial, and how different types of operations — from workshops to large-scale manufacturing — benefit measurably.

Trotec Laser

www.troteclaser.com/en/resources/ebooks/the-definitive-guide-to-automated-fire-protection-for-co2-laser-system



Constructionline Gold Membership for Premier

LEADING UK timber supplier Premier Forest Products has secured the Constructionline Gold Membership, which acknowledges its reputation as a trusted supplier.

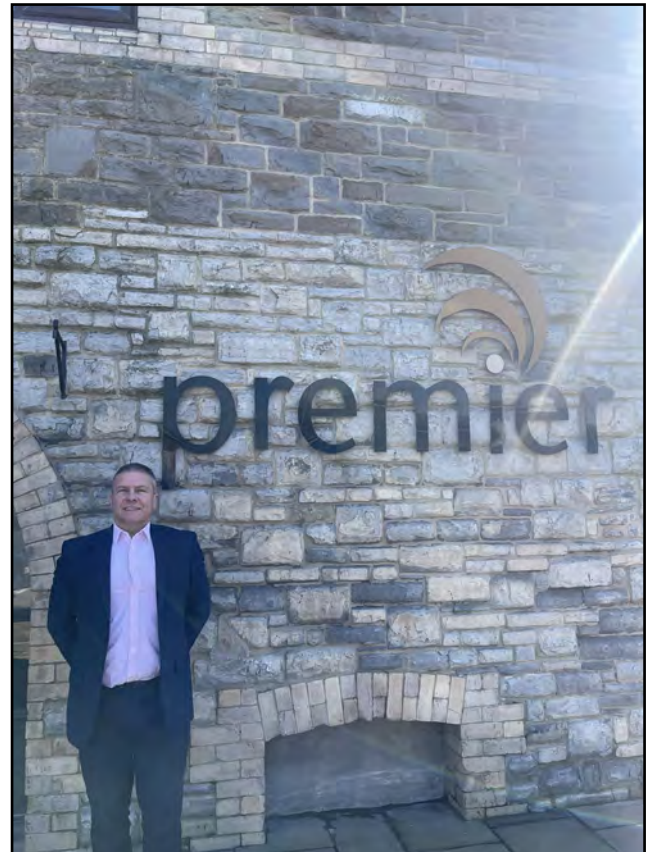
Constructionline is a nationally recognised supplier database containing verified information on more than 45,000 suppliers, accessed by approximately 10,000 buyers. Originally established as a Government department, Constructionline supports thousands of businesses across both the public and private sectors. It operates as part of the Once For All Group, Europe's leading provider of risk management, compliance, supply chain management, and sourcing solutions for the construction and facilities management industries, according to the company.

The Constructionline Gold Membership is the most widely adopted membership level. This membership supports suppliers in meeting key industry requirements such as PAS 91 and the Common Assessment Standard, strengthening their position in the industry. In addition to streamlining the prequalification process and enhancing visibility to buyers seeking high-quality suppliers, the membership also provides access to Marketplace, opening the door to new project opportunities.

Achieving the Constructionline membership allows customers to view Premier Forest's policies and accreditations in one place, showcasing the company's compliance and expertise within the construction sector. It also opens new opportunities within the industry.

Group sales director Andrew Stevenson said: "Our Constructionline Gold membership demonstrates our commitment to meeting the highest standards in health and safety, environmental responsibility and more. By achieving this level of accreditation, we have given our clients and partners clear assurance that our processes, policies and performance have been rigorously reviewed. Being listed at Gold level also increases our visibility to major contractors, helping us build stronger relationships and access new opportunities across the industry."

Premier Forest Products ● premierforest.co.uk



Premier Forest celebrates victory at Newport Business Awards 2026



Left to right: Lucy Owen, Dave Timson, Kevin Ward and Lyndon Edwards.

LEADING UK timber supplier Premier Forest Products has triumphed at the Newport Business Awards 2026, winning three awards in total. Premier Forest Products took home Newport Business of the Year alongside Manufacturing Business of the Year and the Newport Community Award.

The inaugural Newport Business Awards celebrated excellence, innovation, and resilience across Newport's business community. Held at Rodney Parade, the ceremony honoured achievement across multiple categories, including manufacturing, community, green business, and retail.

Premier Forest was named Newport Business of the Year, standing out among other local businesses. Judges cited the company's exceptional growth, innovation, and community influence for their success.

In testament to their local impact, the company won the New-

port Community Award. In particular, the award acknowledged Premier Forest's pioneering Corporate Parenting Programme, delivered in partnership with Newport Council, which has made a tangible difference within the community.

As a part of the Corporate Parenting Programme which launched in 2023, Premier Forest has supported 12 young people through tailored work placements, mentoring, and educational support, providing the confidence, structure, and opportunity to move successfully into the world of work.

Premier Forest also took home the win in the Manufacturing Business of the Year category for the work of their Business Division PWIDF Fire Door Solutions. PWIDF was recognised for its industry leading expertise in the design and manufacture of advanced fire doorsets and specialist doors.

Through precision manufac-

turing, advanced process control and fully traceable, third-party certified systems, PWIDF consistently produces innovative doorsets that integrate critical safety features into a single solution. PWIDF's work elevates awareness of fire safety across the construction sector, reinforcing the vital role of full compliance in building design and delivery. Fire safety is fundamental, not only protecting the lives of occupants and workers, but also in preserving the integrity and long-term usability of buildings.

The company has also developed specialist products for the mental healthcare sector, combining fire safety with enhanced durability and anti-ligature design to support patient wellbeing.

Terry Edgell, co-founder & CEO of Premier Forest Products, said: "Winning three awards at the Newport Business Awards is an incredible honour and a proud milestone for Premier Forest. I'm

delighted to see the hard work, dedication, and ambition of our entire team recognised in this way.

"Our goal has been to build a company that not only delivers outstanding results for our clients, but also fosters a culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement, as well as seizing opportunities to help and support our local communities. These awards are a testament to the commitment our people show every day and the strong relationships we've built with our clients and partners.

"This recognition means a great deal, and while we're taking a moment to celebrate this achievement, we remain firmly focused on the future continuing to grow, innovate, and deliver exceptional value in everything we do."

Premier Forest Products
premierforest.co.uk

Surface Design Show 2026 attracts 6,000+ visitors as 'material evolution' drives innovation

FROM 3-5 February over 6,000 visitors flocked to London's Business Design Centre where over 180 exhibitors showcased the best in surface and material innovation. An expanded programme saw visitors enjoy the return of popular features such as Surface Spotlight, the Innovation Gallery, Green Grads and Surface Design Awards. New for 2026 was a collaboration with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) which hosted two major events during the show. As well as discovering the best in materiality for the built environment, visitors also had the chance to join a range of diverse talks, with over 50 speakers spanning the full breadth of the industry. New for 2026 was the Workshop Stage, which gave visitors a chance to get hands on with materials in guided workshops.

This year's Surface Design Awards were hosted by Hotel Travel editor and owner and director of Kilburn Communications, Hamish Kilburn. The evening was a great success, with awards being dominated by Studio RAP for Lighting, Hospitality, Public Realm and Facades categories and Agri-fruit-bag by Liza C Design for Regenerative Design, Innovation and Sustain-



Artstone Panel Systems.

ability categories. Liza C Design also claimed Supreme Winner and David McGill was awarded the very first Emerging Talent Award with his project Ruvi Acoustic Tile.

Standout exhibitors included Artstone Panel Systems, Surface Matter, A Cimentaria Do Louro S.A, Mundy Veneer and Wonderwall Studios.

Artstone Panel Systems brought a compelling international perspective to the Business Design Centre, showcasing an extensive range of wall solutions that perfectly embodied the show's Material Evolution theme. Their display was a highlight for visitors, drawing significant interest with the Arcquitone pan-

els and the atmospheric, nature inspired palettes of the Nevada, Dusk and Nimbus collections.

This year Surface Matter offered a tribute to transformation that was well aligned with the show's theme of Material Evolution. Celebrating its 13th year, the studio presented an installation titled 'Through time', which showcased a decade of surface innovation by reimagining past exhibition displays into future-facing pieces for adaptive reuse. The exhibit highlighted the pioneering work with surfaces made from recycled paper, plastics, and textiles, while also promoting Material Rescue, a takeback service dedicated to keeping quality materials in circulation. By showcasing a new library of pieces available for rental and rescue, Surface Matter demonstrated how the industry can shift away from single-use culture, proving that exhibition stands themselves can be designed for circularity and legacy rather than waste.

At this year's show, A Cimentaria Do Louro S.A. (ACL) commanded significant attention at the stand, embodying this year's theme of 'Material Evolution' through their innovative approach to concrete. The Portuguese brand, which carries a 48-year legacy



A Cimentaria Do Louro

in technical knowledge and architecture, showcased a diverse range of products including the Design Line wall coverings and Marmocim real terrazzo slabs. The showstopper was the sample of Slimcrete, a flexible concrete which has been subjected to extreme testing, including trials in space. This groundbreaking material garnered lots of attention at the show, demonstrating how traditional concrete can be transformed into a high-performance, adaptable solution for modern interior and exterior design.

Wonderwall Studios also made a significant impact at the 2026 Surface Design Show, contributing to the event's overarching theme of 'Material Evolution'. The display was centred on the unique reclaimed wooden wall panels, which stood out as a primary example of how salvaged materials can be repurposed into high-end architectural features. As specialists in both wood and wall coverings, the studio attracted attention for the ability to transform weathered timber into artistic, textured surfaces that align with the industry's shift toward sustainable and eco-friendly materials.

Mundy Veneer offered a masterclass in natural beauty and technical expertise, showcasing



Wonderwall Systems.

why it is a leading partner for luxury commercial and residential interiors. With an expansive library of over 900 individual veneers across 160 species, the company captivated visitors with its exclusive collection of Tabu Italy pre-dyed and engineered veneers. A major highlight of the display was the introduction of two new colour collections:

BLOOM — a collection of dyed veneers in sophisticated, soft, gentle shades, stronger than pas-

tels and designed to be combined in eclectic, characterful interiors.

EARTH — a selection of earthy neutrals in dark, moody colours, to create a sense of enveloping comfort and a touch of understated drama.

Bringing over 30 years of specialist knowledge to the show, Mundy Veneer successfully balanced aesthetic innovation with rigorous sustainability due diligence.

The 2026 Surface Design Show was a huge success, with an in-

spiring talks programme, innovative stands and visitors and exhibitors alike enjoying the opportunity to experience the best in class in surfaces and materials. The Business Design Centre will once again host the Surface Design Show from 2-4 February 2027 when visitors can look forward to another year of experimentation and material exploration.

Surface Design Show
www surfacedesignshow.com



Bloom by Mundy Veneer.



Earth by Mundy Veneer.

Rotpunkt wins Best Kitchen Stand over 30 m² at Kbb 2026

ROTPUNKT, a leading manufacturer of climate friendly German fitted furniture, continues to make a difference to UK retailers having won 'Best Kitchen Stand over 30 m²' at Kbb Birmingham, following the debut of its brand-new 2026 Collection that serves every room in the home.

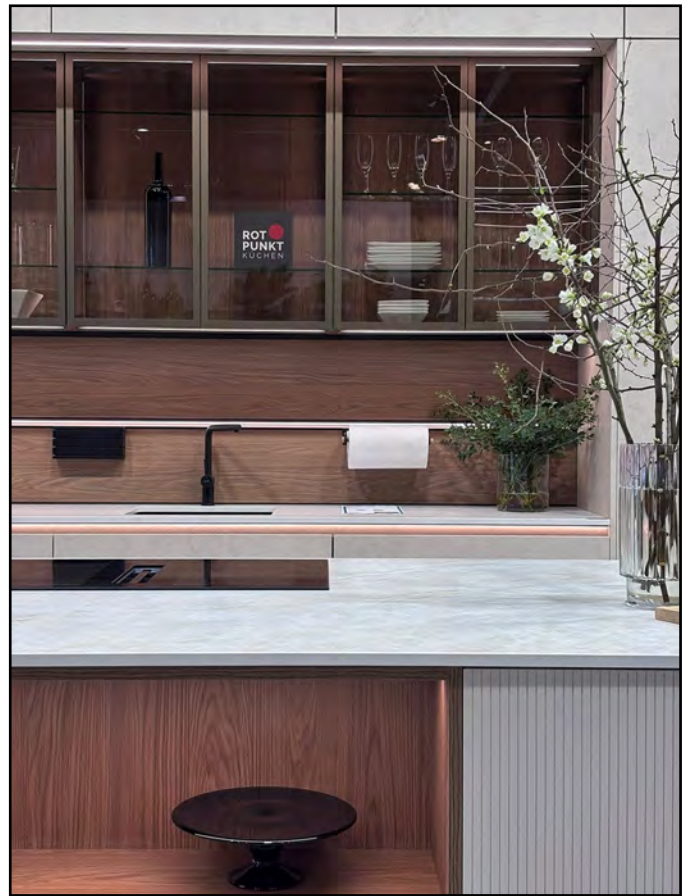
Introducing a cross programme of new furniture concepts, materials, and décors, Rotpunkt showcased two hero kitchen displays that celebrated the key characteristics of Scandinavian design, alongside a fully fitted home bar, and practical home office desk space showing the new pocket doors in a mix of Scandinavian Fjell Oak and Fenix® Rosso Askja (red-brown) with Zerox ME Brass design elements.

A show highlight was the secret studio apartment with kitchen, laundry, living room, bathroom and dressing area, which showed a mix of Zerox MA Tundra furniture with Class VI wall units in Mirror, Industrial Style K doors

with Fluted and Diffuse Glass, Tesuto upholstered units with fashionable grey, fabric back-panels, and natural wood accents in variations of Scandinavian Oak.

It was a Rotpunkt Textured Stone & Memory RI kitchen with Flamed Brass Glass, rich Walnut and Brass metal accents that cleverly concealed the modern studio apartment. Hidden behind a run of full height cabinets, visitors got to explore a fully immersive, real world studio apartment using the company's exclusive access doors, which adopt the same look as the furniture but open in reverse to show how you can introduce concealed working areas in an open plan kitchen space.

Matt Phillips, head of UK operations at Rotpunkt says, "We are absolutely delighted by the positive response and significant market acceptance of our 2026 Collection, as the stand was overflowing with new and existing retail partners. Excited by Rotpunkt's latest innovations, we used the Kbb show to fortify our



position as a true furniture brand that supports coordinated design schemes throughout the entire home. We even got to include a multimedia room, which included a full-scale golf simulator for a bit of light relief and gentle competition as visitors played to get closest to the pin. Thanks to Lee Mackie for his expertise throughout the show, we definitely made an impression."

Key highlights from the new Rotpunkt 2026 Collection shown at Kbb Birmingham include:

Wood — Helping to answer the markets' love of Scandinavian style, where a quality choice of materials in neutral colours is a key feature in today's home, the new Zerox SY VER furniture is available in a range of light and dark wood colours including Scandinavian Brown Oak with undertones of mocha and sand; Scandinavian Fjell Oak, a dark wood colour with hints of coffee and chocolate; and Loft Smoky Oak that provides an ashy grey, smoked wood effect.

Metal — As the practical application of metallic finishes in the home continues to evolve at pace, Rotpunkt Zerox ME introduces a brand-new range of door options and integrated handle rails in three metal finishes: Brass, Inox, and Copper. Designed to bridge the gap between the kitchen and living space, end users can mix and match Zerox ME with door and drawer handles, light fixtures, furniture trims and frames, kitchen appliances, sinks and taps, as well as the latest industrial style surface solutions across the walls and counters.

Glass — Playing to the trend for new-age materials that are distinct and notably luxurious, the new Industrial Style K25 Smoked Brass units were seen throughout the stand and featured the new Flamed Brass Glass with 25 mm Brass Metal frame. Shown in a variety of forms, Rotpunkt inspired visitors with a suite of K25 design concepts including a pair of full height display cabinets and matching wall units. Glass also



featured in the boutique style dressing room with fitted wardrobes, and mirrored wall cabinets in the bathroom vanity area.

Slim Shaker — For anyone seeking modern fitted furniture with a nod to Shaker, then Rotpunkt's popular Smala range revealed Smala 25 and Smala 40, which offers 25 mm or 40 mm width frames. Delivering the traditional characteristics of a classic in-frame door but with a streamlined aesthetic linked to modern design schemes, Smala adds depth and texture to essential pieces of furniture and is available in a broad range of finishes including the new Forest Brown Oak, Forest Fjell Oak, Sandy Beach, and Blossom White.

Curved — Shaping the latest must-have design schemes, the new Curved End Panels by Rotpunkt answer the market shift towards softer, organic forms where key pieces in the home are being used to create a more homely aesthetic. Providing the opportunity to achieve custom curves in the kitchen, bathroom, and living space, the new curved end panels are available with either 50 mm or 150 mm thickness in a variety of cabinet heights, widths, depths, door styles, and colours.

Bathroom — Enabling UK retailers to specify Rotpunkt fur-

niture in a brand-new living environment, the company's new range of bathroom furniture puts creative visions at the forefront of every project. Available in all colours and finish options by Rotpunkt, trade customers can choose from a range of contemporary handleless base units, complementary tall units, and mirrored cabinets in both standard and XTend dimensions to suit every size and shape of bathroom space.

Show Partners — Neolith worktops, fabricated and installed by The Marble Group, included Neolith Retrostone and new Neolith Taj Mahal 20 mm throughout the kitchens, with 12 mm Neolith Estatuario used for the apartment kitchen and bathroom vanity area. To finish, both kitchens included an Abode KOTO Sink with complementary Matt Black Prime and Fraction Mixer Taps, and a pair of CAVA Round Chalk Basins with Aquip Tall Basin Mixers featured in the apartment bathroom.

From new hardwood timbers through to modern frame options, fluted designs in wood and glass, and custom curves, Rotpunkt introduced a selection of new doors for the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and living space alongside its exclusive collection of all 27 Fenix® colours.

Rotpunkt UK & Ireland
 Email info@rotpunktuk.com
www.rotpunkt.co.uk
rotpunktkuechen.de



SCM confirms its role as a strategic partner for the entire wood industry at Xylexpo 2026, 9-12 June

SCM confirms its participation in the next edition of Xylexpo, scheduled at Fieramilano Rho from 9 to 12 June: an opportunity to discover the latest innovations for the entire wood-working industry.

At the Group's stand in Hall 14, visitors will experience a comprehensive and integrated ecosystem of advanced technologies, software and digital services, developed with a clear goal: to provide companies in the sector with a solid, strategic and long-term partnership to tackle the challenges of an increasingly dynamic and competitive global market.

This vision is embodied by SCM's technological innovation, showcased at the exhibition through a major new launch: accord 500 edge, the latest addition to the accord range.

The new all-round CNC machining centre stands out as a complete and multifunctional solution integrating edgebanding technology, confirming SCM's ability to meet increasingly advanced production requirements, both for solid wood processing and the furniture industry.

Designed for medium and large-sized companies, accord



500 edge ensures high performance and maximum flexibility. It is particularly suited for specific sectors such as contract furniture, bedrooms, boats and caravans. The machining centre has also been designed to suit the requirements of customers who work on a 'just in time' basis, as this machine combines all the functions

of a factory in a single solution.

Among its key features is the H80C "Compact" edgebanding unit, equipped with various tool changers for tools, glues, edges and pressing elements, enabling fast and reliable automatic switching between different processes. Independent operating units ensure high productivity

even in limited spaces, while the extraction systems guarantee maximum cleanliness and efficiency in all working conditions.

The model showcased at the exhibition is equipped with SCM's Maestro software suite, including the Maestro active operator interface and Maestro lab CAD/CAM programming software, designed



to simplify and further improve production process management.

In addition, the new accord 500 edge is enhanced by Maestro lab edge, a dedicated CAD/CAM solution for the entire panel edgebanding process, enabling full management of edges and related application strategies.

Software, MES/MOM and digital services

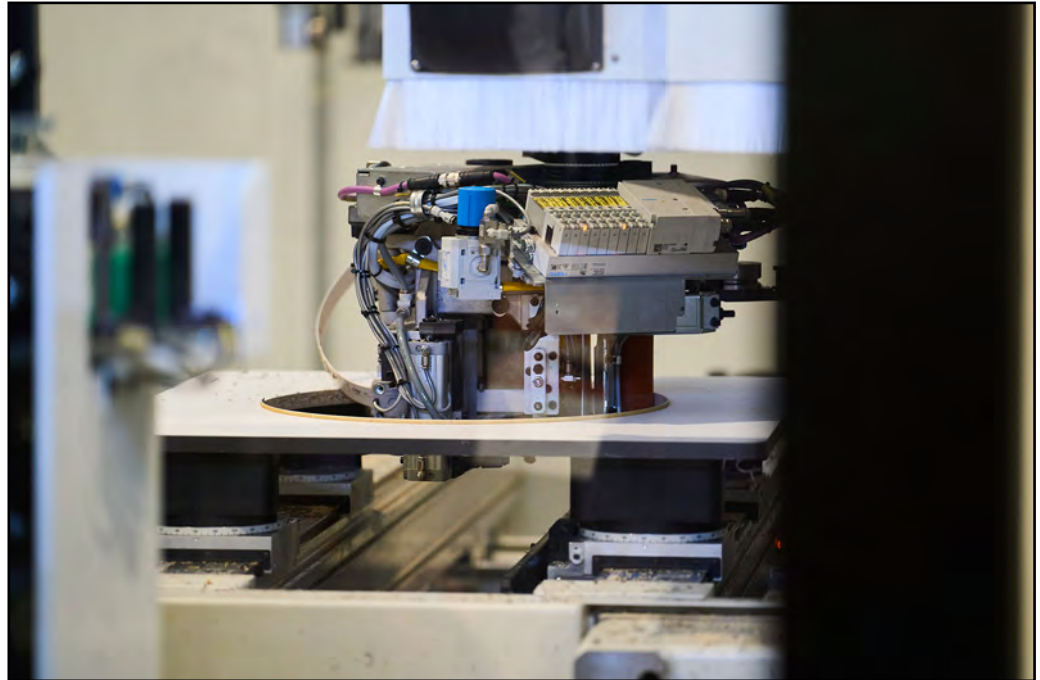
At Xylexpo 2026, SCM will present a new development model where competitive advantage is no longer linked to the individual machine or system, but to the ability to integrate them into connected, flexible and sustainable production systems.

In this context, great emphasis will be placed on SCM's integrated service ecosystem, designed to deliver higher efficiency, more stable operational control and continuous production through technologies that transform machine data into actionable value.

At the core of this modular architecture is WinMES, SCM's Manufacturing Execution System developed in partnership with Tecnest, a Group company specialising in advanced software solutions for production planning, manufacturing management and supply chain management.

WinMES acts as the true "digital brain" of the factory, integrating and interpreting real-time data to optimise production flows, accelerate operational decision making and enhance overall process control.

Factory intelligence is further enhanced by Smart Spindle, the



advanced spindle sensor system enabling predictive analysis and helping to prevent unplanned machine downtime.

Significant focus will also be placed on IoT Solution, SCM's renewed digital platform enabling smarter, more sustainable and data-driven processes, while providing access to next-generation proactive services with tangible benefits: +20% efficiency, +30% product quality and -30% operating costs.

To protect the entire ecosystem, SCM will also present its Cybersecurity solution, ensuring full protection of data, processes and infrastructures.

As for product software, Xylex-

po will also highlight new features of the Maestro 3D module for nesting machining centres. These allow all machining operations to be recognised and generated with a single click, significantly reducing programming time.

This development reaches its full potential when combined with the enhanced Maestro nesting optimisation algorithm, which enables the import of 3D cabinet files without the need to pre-program all machining operations, optimising processes and reducing waste thanks to more compact cutting patterns.

A complete offering for every production need

For advanced joinery, the spotlight will also be on the "blade off" system, integrated with SCM circular saws, designed to increase safety levels through an intelligent detection system and an efficient blade retraction mechanism.

In addition to the solutions on display, visitors will have the opportunity to explore SCM's entire offering together with its technology experts: machines and systems covering every stage of the production process and all major application sectors, from furniture and windows & doors to timber construction, surface treatment and advanced woodworking.

Also in the spotlight will be SCM Engineering solutions, including integrated automation systems and advanced robotics developed by Tecno Logica, designed to support extremely high production capacities even in highly variable and complex scenarios.

With its comprehensive offering, SCM will deliver at Xylexpo a concrete experience of innovation and digital transformation, fostering long-term, value-driven partnerships with its customers.

SCM Group
www.scmgroup.com/en/scmwood/news-events/events/e237976/xylexpo



Successful HOLZ-HANDWERK and FENSTERBAU FRONTALE 2026



WITH A noticeable surge of energy, an impressive buzz in the halls and an exhibitor increase compared to the previous event, the HOLZ-HANDWERK and FENSTERBAU FRONTALE 2026 trade fair duo came to a successful close after four intense and inspiring days.

From 24 to 27 March 2026, Nuremberg once again became the heart of the international window, door, façade and woodworking trade.

With around 75,000 visitors from 117 countries and 1,022 exhibitors from 47 countries, the trade fair duo has confirmed its role as a central industry meeting place and as a platform that provides guidance, showcases innovations and jointly develops future strategies. The next event is already scheduled for 28 to 31 March 2028.

This year's event impressively demonstrated the importance of face-to-face interaction and hands-on technology for an in-

dustry amid transformation. Packed halls at the Nuremberg Exhibition Centre, impressive stands, in-depth discussions and a top-class supporting programme characterised the event throughout all four days.

Both events combined practical knowledge-sharing, strategic future-oriented topics and international expertise — a combination that clearly delighted visitors.

Strong voices from the exhibition management

Stefan Dittrich, director exhibition HOLZ-HANDWERK, draws a thoroughly positive conclusion: "These four days have impressively demonstrated just how much energy and innovative spirit there is within the craft sector. The atmosphere on site was fantastic. HOLZ-HANDWERK 2026 has once again proven that personal interaction and the discovery of innovative technologies are indispensable for carpenters and joiners. This underlines the importance of

this trade fair as a central meeting place for the community."

Elke Harreiß, executive director FENSTERBAU FRONTALE, emphasises the added value of joint industry dialogue: "The atmosphere thrives on the passion of this industry. FENSTERBAU FRONTALE is the place where the community finds its bearings, draws inspiration and develops further. The fact that the trade fair duo has grown demonstrates the high level of synergy and just how important this exchange is, particularly at this time.

"My special thanks go to all the exhibitors, whose commitment and presence have contributed significantly to this strong collective result."

Chiara Sträßner, director exhibition FENSTERBAU FRONTALE, sums it up: "Our new formats — from the Stage and the Innovation Award to the Future Room — have demonstrated the shared value we can create: sharing knowledge, connecting

perspectives and fostering genuine inspiration. The many positive discussions and strong response confirm that Nuremberg is the right place for the industry to move forward together and shape the future."

A supporting programme that set new standards

HOLZ-HANDWERK, organised in collaboration with the VDMA Woodworking Machinery Association and supported by the Bavarian Association of Cabinetmakers (FSH), offered visitors a particularly lively and dialogue-oriented programme for the first time in 2026. In the new HOLZ-HANDWERK Arena, supported by the trade magazine *dds*, up-and-coming talents, experienced craft businesses and industry experts discussed current challenges in training, digitalisation and the use of materials. The Arena thus not only provided a concise overview of the status quo but also looked to the future: it impressively

EXHIBITIONS

demonstrated how modern craft businesses will work in the future — and which topics will have a decisive influence on the industry in the coming years.

Another highlight was the Material Show curated by FSH, which showcased innovative materials for the joinery trade and provided fresh inspiration for design.

The HOLZ-HANDWERK Campus also provided a valuable overview of technical training pathways and further education opportunities. Universities, vocational colleges and other institutions presented modern teaching content and demonstrated just how diverse and future-proof careers in the woodworking trade are.

FENSTERBAU FRONTALE, supported by the trade association for 'Glass, Window and Façade Baden-Württemberg' and state guild association of the Bavarian glazier trade, impressed with a comprehensive, internationally oriented programme that shed light on key issues facing the construction industry. The new FENSTERBAU FRONTALE Stage focused on energy-efficient refurbishment, mass production, climate adaptation, the circular economy and digital planning processes. The FENSTERBAU FRONTALE Forum also offered a dedicated, in-depth platform for specialist knowledge and practical insights.

A particular highlight was the first-ever presentation of the FENSTERBAU FRONTALE Innovation Award on stage, which recognised outstanding product



developments. This year's winner, Remmers GmbH, was selected from a total of 39 entries and honoured for its innovation, the Induline I-130. At the FENSTERBAU FRONTALE Forum, the titles of 'Window Manufacturer of the Year 2026' were awarded to MB Fensterbau Beelitz GmbH as well as the 'MeisterAward' to Hendryk Urban and Lisa-Marie Schmiedle.

At AIT-Dialog's international 'Architecture-Window-Façade' forum, this year's theme 'Balance — Building in Equilibrium' focused on changing planning requirements and sustainable construction methods. Following the event, guided tours provided an opportunity to explore the

topics in greater depth through direct discussions with relevant exhibitors.

The programme was rounded off by the special exhibition 'klima.sicher.bauen' (climate.safe. building) in collaboration with ift Rosenheim, which provided practical insights into sustainable construction methods and climate-resilient solutions, as well as the 'Metallbautreff' (metal construction meeting) powered by metall-markt.net, which served as a central hub for knowledge exchange and networking.

Strong synergy between the trade fair duo

The new 'Future Room', jointly

created by HOLZ-HANDWERK, FENSTERBAU FRONTALE and 100 PROZENT DIGITAL, showcased practical digital office concepts, AI-supported planning, smart building technologies, and future-oriented topics relating to leadership, the next generation of talent and organisational development.

The jointly curated 'Focus Interior Doors' programme, organised in collaboration with the trade magazine BM, provided a compelling demonstration of how aesthetics, functionality and innovation can be combined in modern door solutions. The programme was complemented by special guided tours.

A conclusion with momentum

The 2026 trade fair duo has impressively demonstrated that HOLZ-HANDWERK and FENSTERBAU FRONTALE give the industry a strong voice. They remain the central meeting place where innovations are showcased, networks grow and trends are set.

The community is looking ahead — united, connected and full of creative drive.

HOLZ-HANDWERK
www.holz-handwerk.de/en

FENSTERBAU FRONTALE
www.frontale.de/en



Leitz inspires at HOLZ-HANDWERK 2026 in the company's 150th anniversary year

FOR LEITZ, the strong trade fair duo HOLZ-HANDWERK and FENSTERBAU FRONTALE 2026 in Nuremberg were entirely dedicated to the company's 150th anniversary. The world market leader's exhibition presence reflected innovation, tradition, and close customer partnership — from craftsmanship to industrial production. Under the motto "We shape the future," Leitz impressively demonstrated how decades of experience combine with cutting edge technology to create customer-oriented solutions.

The anniversary could be felt throughout the entire exhibition stand — not as a retrospective, but as a promise of performance to all customers. Conversations at the stand clearly showed how consistently Leitz has developed its values across generations while continuing to plan for the future. For customers, this means

one thing above all: reliable quality, reflected in dependable processes, durable tools, and predictable performance.

Visitors experienced not only innovative tooling solutions, but also the story of a fifth generation family-owned company that values its strong roots in Germany while consistently thinking and acting on a global scale.

A particular highlight was the world premiere of the "wow product" for the 150th anniversary: the FineCut circular sawblade. It quickly became a magnet for trade visitors and the focal point of intensive professional discussions. The strong interest is easy to explain, as this innovation offers clear practical benefits: it enables the highest cutting quality without the need for scoring blades, creating direct advantages in quality, time, and cost. This is precisely where Leitz's ambition becomes evident — consistently transform-



The new FineCut circular sawblade was the "wow product" celebrating the company's 150th anniversary at the Leitz exhibition stand. (Photo: Leitz)



The large number of visitors demonstrated that Leitz's presence at Holz-Handwerk was a complete success. (Photo: Leitz)

ing technological precision into measurable customer benefits.

Beyond this highlight, Leitz presented a broad portfolio for both trades and industry, ranging from solutions for timber system construction and window manufacturing to applications in furniture production and CNC machining. Digital solutions such as the LeitzXPert app and ETML — a manufacturer-independent, standardised language for communication between tools and machines — also underline the company's commitment to supporting customers holistically in optimising their processes.

The atmosphere of HOLZ-HANDWERK itself deserves special mention. With 75,000 trade visitors from 117 countries, the fair once again provided the ideal platform for personal exchange with customers. For Leitz, this direct dialogue is of central importance in maintaining existing contacts, building new relationships,

and jointly developing solutions. Customer proximity was once again lived intensively this year — visible and on equal footing. This was also reflected in the open design of the exhibition stand. A visual and craftsmanship highlight were the display tables and the anniversary sculpture, both designed by Leitz and manufactured in-house using Leitz tools.

Leitz draws an entirely positive conclusion from the trade fair. The high visitor frequency, strong level of interest, and consistently positive feedback confirm the chosen path. With an exhibition presence that combined emotion, innovation, and tradition, Leitz made a strong statement in its anniversary year and once again demonstrated how Leitz shapes the future. Accordingly, the company is already looking forward with anticipation to the next HOLZ-HANDWERK in 2028.

Leitz
www.leitz.org/en-gb/

LIGNA 2027: 80% of space already booked

MORE THAN a year before LIGNA 2027, a world leading trade fair for the woodworking and wood processing industry, the exhibition is reporting an excellent booking situation. More than 80 percent of the exhibition space has already been allocated, and all leading companies in the sector have registered their participation — across all exhibition areas of LIGNA. This confirms the woodworking community's unwavering commitment to the fair — despite the still highly strained global economic climate.

"The clear and overall commitment from the companies shows that LIGNA remains the premier platform for international market players," says Stephanie Wagner, head of LIGNA at Deutsche Messe AG.

Among the industry leaders are major players such as Homag, Weinig, Biesse, SCM, Leitz, Leuco, Dieffenbacher, Siempelkamp, Sennebogen, Liebherr, Barberan, Cefla, Robert Bürkle, Ledinek, Linck, Microtec, Festool, Mafell, Hundegger, and Felder.



Stephanie Wagner adds: "These companies represent the entire woodworking community, which strengthens Germany as a trade fair location, brings the international woodworking industry to Hanover every two years, and collectively formulates the ambition to fulfill and further develop the label 'Global Industry Gathering'. LIGNA's strong booking status shows that exhibitors use the fair as an international platform to demonstrate expertise, strength, innovation and global visibility

— particularly in a challenging environment. The impressive registration numbers also highlight how important LIGNA's objectives currently are for the companies: whether technological advancements, new market requirements or the need for international exchange at decision-maker level — exhibitors view LIGNA as a stable anchor point at a time when numerous markets are under simultaneous pressure."

Dr. Bernhard Dirr, managing director VDMA Woodworking Machin-

ery Association, sees the opportunities arising from a rapidly changing global economy. "The global uncertainty and changes in the world economy — inconvenient as they often may be — also present opportunities for our industry. Production sites are being shifted more frequently than in the past. The investment pressure driven by societal trends is steadily increasing, and many planned investments have already been postponed for quite some time. Significant progress is also becoming evident in areas that may not come to mind immediately, such as recycling technologies or measurement technology. In May 2027, LIGNA will serve as the central marketplace of the industry, providing orientation. With its new date and without a national public holiday, it will fully live up to its outstanding role as an innovation fair. Modern woodworking thrives on innovation, much of which emerges at LIGNA — simply because it is most visible here. Exhibitors are eager to make use of this effect."

LIGNA 2027
www.ligna.de

FINISHES

Built-in antimicrobial protection

IN DECEMBER 2025, NHS England reported a sharp surge in flu and norovirus hospitalisations, with flu admissions rising by more than 55% in a single week. Readily transmitted via contaminated high-touch surfaces, these viruses have renewed concerns about hygiene resilience across hospitals, transport systems, schools, and other communal spaces.

High-touch surfaces such as door handles, tables, light-switches, and handrails are known hotspots for microbial transfer. These surfaces can harbour pathogens for extended periods, allowing them to spread quickly between patients, staff and passengers alike.

Michael Laurier, CEO at Symphony Environmental, argues that the

company's d2p antimicrobial technology, integrated directly into plastic products during manufacturing, is urgently needed to provide permanent 24/7 protection.

He says: "The recent spike in hospital infections by flu and norovirus is a stark reminder of how quickly pathogens can impact public services when surface transmission isn't adequately controlled. As infection concerns rise, passive, built-in antimicrobial protection should be a core component of public-health infrastructure, not just an optional add-on.

"High-touch environments, from hospitals and care-homes, to buses, trains and kitchen facilities, play a critical role in the spread of infectious agents, especially in winter months. d2p antimicrobial technology helps break that chain of transmission."

Unlike sprays or temporary surface coatings that quickly lose efficacy, d2p is embedded into the plastic products at the point of manufacture. This ensures that it becomes an intrinsic, non-leaching part of the plastic itself, providing long-lasting performance without altering the product's appearance or functionality.

Mr Laurier explains, "By integrating antimicrobial performance directly into the plastic surfaces, it will inhibit the growth of bacteria and viruses and kill these pathogens around the clock. This creates safer, more hygienic environments without altering the feel, appearance or functionality of the product, thus breaking the chain of transmission and making safer places."

Mr Laurier concludes, "It is very easy, and not at all expensive to provide protection from microbes — just contact us and our technical dept will help you to do it."

Symphony Environmental
www.symphonyenvironmental.com



Interpon introduces the new Futura 2026-2029 Collection: inspired by the past, made for the future

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

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

A fusion of past influence and future ambition

An iconic cornerstone in architectural design for more than two decades, Futura has long guided the industry's approach to colour, finish, and material expression. The 2026-2029 Collection continues that legacy with two palettes that connect generations of design in a single creative language supported by long-lasting performance that will endure time, weather, and wear:

High Serenity offers soft, nature-inspired hues including warm stone, calming metals and quiet browns to elevate spaces with subtle texture and understated elegance.

Bold Adventure brings energy and momentum, with dynamic colours that glisten and sparkle through earthy reds, regal blues, and finishes designed to inspire confidence and exploration.

Jorrit van Rijn, global marketing director at AkzoNobel Powder Coatings, says: "Futura has always helped architects express their vision with a superdurability that can withstand demanding climates. This new collection blends heritage design inspiration with ideas that push concepts forward, giving customers colours and finishes that feel both timeless and completely fresh."

Sustainability built in — as a standard

Every colour in the Futura 2026-2029 Collection now comes with sustainability built in. Not only its superdurability, extending product lifecycles, but also with Low-E curing across all new colours, and

bio-attributed raw materials as standard across the entire range manufactured in the EMEA region.

Low-E technology supports curing at lower temperatures or faster line speeds, helping reduce energy use and unlock operational efficiency.

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

"Sustainable coating choices should not come at a higher cost or as a specialist option," says Mr Van Rijn. "But simply the way high performance architectural coatings should be made: efficient, responsible, and ready for the future."

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

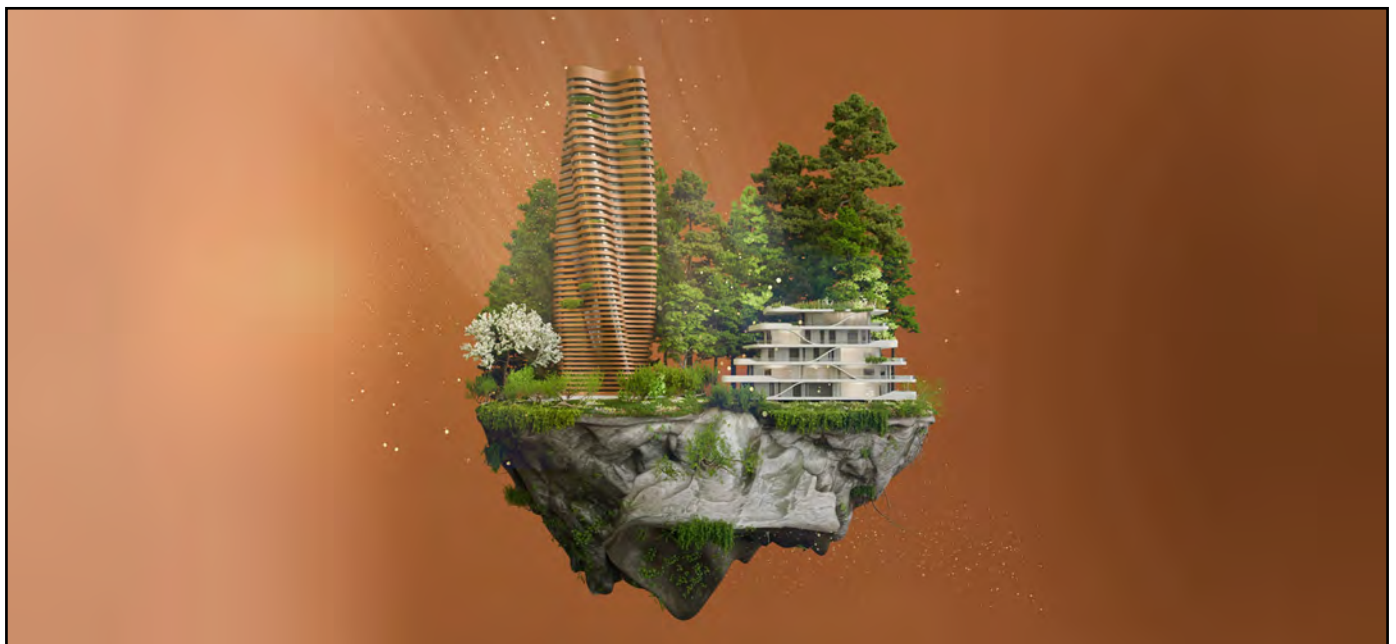
"Futura brings our Own Your Impact approach to life," Mr Van Rijn says. "By embedding sustainability and performance as standard, it delivers practical, tangible benefits that help architects and fabricators make responsible choices with confidence and aligned with the future they want to create."

"Our Futura 2026-2029 Collection shows what we stand for: inspiring design grounded in heritage, built with the future in mind, and delivered with sustainability as standard. We believe responsible choices should come naturally — without incurring higher costs and never at the expense of durability, beauty, or performance."

With its fusion of animated colours, technical excellence, and responsible innovation, the Futura 2026-2029 collection gives architects a powerful way to shape the next generation of building design — confidently, creatively, and with impact.

Interpon

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



Liberon competition puts students' skills to the test

STUDENTS at Burton and South Derbyshire College and Newark College have taken part in a competition set by Liberon, the woodcare experts, to test their carpentry and joinery skills. The initiative aims to teach students about specialist woodcare options, and ask them to apply the correct finishes on imaginative items they have made. At Burton and South Derbyshire College the competition required learners on the college's Level 2 Diploma in Bench Joinery course to design, build and finish an interior chair or bench. At Newark College students on its Level 3 Furniture Design and Making course were asked to design, build and finish a stand either for a pair of spectacles or a mobile phone.

Teams of students at Burton and South Derbyshire College were given approximately fifteen hours in total to complete the project. The winning team came up with the idea of producing a button-themed chair, taking inspiration from a photograph of a piece of Ikea furniture. The finished chair features a removable horizontal section to create a useful storage space. The project saw the team working with plywood and various softwoods.

Course leader, Ian Vanes-Jones, commented: "We asked the students to design, build and finish a project to a tight schedule, and they have done very well. The whole initiative showed off their

design skills; abilities on our CNC machine and lathe; and got them working well together as members of a team. I'm very keen on Liberon's Black Patinating Wax and Palette Wood Dyes, and this competition has highlighted the attractive effects the products can achieve."

At Newark College, a spectacles stand produced by the competition winner, featured a beautiful bird design with the bird's beak forming the section onto which glasses could easily be held in place. It was finished to a very high standard. Other interesting designs featured a variety of animals and even an Easter Island style head!

Course Leader, Richard Preece, at Newark College said: "The students produced some excellent work. They were given the option of using Oak, Elm, Ash, Ewe, Maple and Tulipwood. The project has been a good means of testing the learners' accuracy in marking out and cutting out; their patience; their attention to detail; and their skills in working with a variety of timbers. Ewe's interlocked grain, for example, makes it harder to plane than other timbers, so using this wood in particular proved to be a good challenge. In addition, the competition looked at the students' wood finishing techniques, and they could choose from a variety of Liberon's oils, varnishes and stains."

The entries were judged by staff at the colleges who agreed that the standard of work was high and that making a choice



had not been an easy decision. The three members of the winning team at Burton and South Derbyshire College each won a £25 Amazon voucher provided by Liberon, as did the winner, runner-up and second runner-up at Newark College.

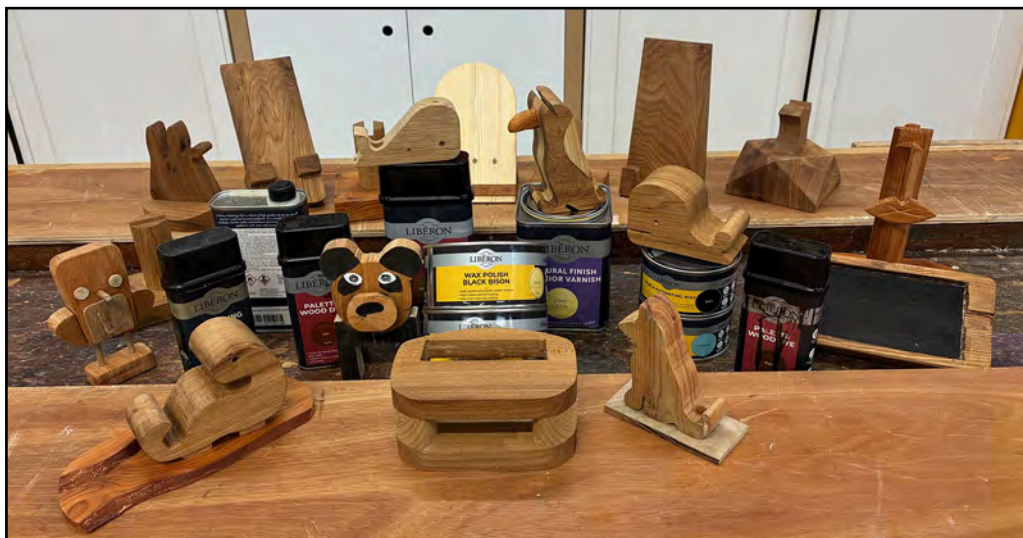
Richard Bradley, UK Head of Marketing at Liberon, says: "The students did brilliantly and produced some really imaginative designs. While the winning entries are great, I also congratulate the other participants in the work they did too. Many thanks to all the students who took part and to

the colleges too for their enthusiastic support."

Liberon is renowned for excellence in products such as dyes, waxes, oils and varnishes. The brand is well-known for assisting not just professional woodworkers but also professional painters and decorators in enhancing their reputation. Producing beautiful, right-first-time results means the trades can rely on the products for visually stunning results.

In addition, Liberon has a broad range of solutions available for tackling all kinds of wood preparation and repair to ensure users achieve perfect results and keep them looking good for their customers. These include three-part touch-up pens for disguising scratches and small blemishes; burnishing cream for cleaning, reviving and rejuvenating highly polished interior surfaces; retouch crayons for filling and masking superficial scratches, nail holes, worm holes, etc.; retouch cream for filling mitre joints, pin holes on frames or for furniture restoration; ring remover for removing most white water marks and heat marks; shellac filler sticks for filling surface blemishes; and wax filler sticks for repairing cracks, splits and small to medium-sized holes.

Liberon
www.liberon.co.uk



Carpentry students visit live Bloor Homes development at Thurston

DURING National Apprenticeship Week in February 2026, Bloor Homes welcomed its first group of eleven carpentry students from the Eastern Education Group (part of West Suffolk College) to its Thurston Grove development to experience how carpenters operate within a live building site.

Site manager, Matthew Thurston, who started his career as a carpenter, and assistant site manager, John Winter, introduced students to the teaching rigs used by Bloor Homes, demonstrating the high-quality carpentry expected on all Bloor Homes developments.

Students were given a full tour of the site, including the opportunity to view plots at different stages. They also had the opportunity to talk to Bloor Homes' current carpentry apprentices and ask questions of the developer's dedicated carpentry and brickwork apprentice masters — Andy Scripps and Ray Amos — about working on site and the Bloor Homes apprenticeship scheme.

Matthew Thurston said: "This was a really good opportunity for the students to experience what it's like to work on a live development and to meet and spend time with our current carpentry apprentices who showed them how they work practically in various applications. It was great to see the engagement between the students and our apprentices; there were lots of questions about construction practices, as well as our apprenticeship schemes."

Unlike typical apprenticeships where students are placed with a carpenter or bricklayer and attend college once a week, Bloor Homes provides dedicated training under the guidance of experienced apprentice masters, Andy and Ray, who have more than 70 years of combined experience working for Bloor Homes, and 22 years combined experience of working with apprentices.

Bloor Homes' Thurston Grove development is one of the developer's training hubs across the country where young construction professionals can train and qualify whilst gaining valuable, hands-on experience. The aim is to encourage talent into the industry and futureproof its workforce in and around Bury St Edmunds. From day one, new apprentices work on a live development alongside other apprentices who support each other and learn together. Bloor Homes also provides new apprentices with tools so they are not having to self-fund them and even pays for travel to and from site.



Carpentry students from the Eastern Education Group (part of West Suffolk College) had the opportunity to visit Bloor Homes at its live development at Thurston.

Andy Scripps, carpentry apprentice master, said: "It was really good to see our current carpentry apprentices, many of whom were in the same shoes as these young students not so long ago, showing our visitors how they work practically in roof and internal applications, and engaging with them."

Both the carpentry and brickwork apprenticeships across East Anglia, led by Andy and Ray, have been extremely successful, with many young professionals going on to work within site management, for local sub-contractors or even starting up their own businesses.

Gavin Featherstone, carpentry lecturer at Eastern Education Group said: "Thank you to Bloor Homes for such an interesting and informative session for our students. The visit was really well structured and having the opportunity to speak with key people within the site and training teams, as well as the current apprentices, was invaluable. The whole experience really brought everything that they are learning in college to life."

Bloor Homes ● <https://bloorhomes.com>

FMB Scotland celebrates Apprenticeship Week

THE FEDERATION of Master Builders (FMB) Scotland celebrated Scottish Apprenticeship Week (2-8 March) by recognising the vital role apprentices play in the construction sector across Scotland.

With 31.7% of Scottish construction businesses experiencing worker shortages and the sector needing to recruit approximately 3,600 extra workers per year, FMB Scotland revealed its manifesto ahead of the local elections this year, calling on the Scottish Government to deliver a skills and training system that genuinely works for small building companies.

Despite strong apprenticeship numbers — with over 25,500 Modern Apprenticeships started in 2024-25, including more than a third in Construction, Engineering, Energy and related occupations — employers face stagnant apprenticeship funding and rising costs. For every £1 of Government investment in apprenticeships, employers contribute an additional £10.

FMB Scotland highlighted the success stories of award-winning apprentices like Liam Adamson, the winner of the Master Builder Apprentice of the Year and Ben Jarvie, a bricklaying apprentice with Haldane Construction Services, as examples of the talent being developed in Scotland's construction sector.

Gordon Nelson, director of FMB Scotland, said: "Scottish construction apprentices are recognised as being world class and each and every one of them is critical to Scotland's economy and future prosperity. I know how dedicated and proud apprentices are from across the building trades are. So we need more of the likes of Alexandra Madden from DITT Ltd, Liam Adamson and Ben Jarvie of Haldane Construction Services to join the industry.

"In Scotland it is small and medium sized firms that train the vast majority of construction apprentices. As we argue in the FMB's Builders' Manifesto for Scotland 2026, our local building companies are the backbone of the construction and local environment sector. However, they need better support from the Scottish Government if they are to employ and train more apprentices. This so we have a future workforce to build more new homes and deliver fabric and insulation upgrades across our built environment.

"Right now, though, employers face stagnant apprenticeship funding and rising costs. For every £1 of Government investment in apprenticeships, employers contribute an additional £10. Quite simply, we cannot afford to allow this ratio to widen. This is why the FMB is calling for the Scottish Government to prioritise skills and training funding for the construction industry."

Liam Adamson, Master Builder Apprentice of the Year Award Winner, said: "If you are a young person looking to get into the construction industry, I would recommend it as a trade for life that you will use for the rest of your life. So if you have got that opportunity, I would grab it with both hands. And for any young person, try not to take that opportunity for granted. If you have got a good company behind you and you are involved in a college apprenticeship, it is an exceptional opportunity that you should grab."

Ben Jarvie, bricklaying apprentice at Haldane Construction Services, added: "What I love about my job is just the variety of the

stuff that we do within our company. You could be laying block one day or inside helping the joiners another day. It's completely different every day, and it's good for the change. I didn't know what I wanted to do after school, my brother went into science. I tried science, wasn't for it. And then I went towards construction, done the multi-trade courses, and that's where I found my keenness and love for bricklaying. My grandad was an architect and my great grandad was also a joiner, so it's a firm family tradition."

Not all builders take the apprenticeship route, like Martin Dally from MD Builders, who concluded: "I began my career in construction after I suffered a serious accident while playing football, which prevented me from returning to contact sports. When I was growing up and in education, I was only ever taught there were two paths to choose: playing football or going to university. Therefore, I didn't even consider a career in construction until I was 19.

"Luckily for me, I had a family member who was a joiner, and I decided to work as a labourer for him until I could figure out what I wanted to do. While I was working with him, I started to learn the trade and began to work with other trades such as tilers, bricklayers, and builders. I couldn't believe how much I enjoyed it, and that's when I decided to pursue a career in construction. At the age of 21, my tradesman decided to retire and move away, so that's when I decided to set up my own business (MD Builders). I bought my first van and grew from there. A few years later, MD Builders was voted the Best Building Contractor in Scotland and also the top tradesperson in the UK.

"Training the new generation of tradespeople is one of the most important necessities needed right now in the UK. The UK needs tradespeople to continue to grow, and with over a third of the construction workforce set to retire in the next four years, we need to act now. We need to get into schools earlier and set up proper work experience programs to showcase construction as an exciting career, but most importantly, there needs to be more funding made available for employers to take on apprentices."

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



Building the next generation

by Roly Ward, Head of Business Development, MEDITE SMARTPLY

THE UK construction industry is facing a defining challenge. Ambitious housing targets, the transition to low-carbon buildings and the increasing use of modern methods of construction all point towards a sector in transformation. Yet, according to the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), the workforce required to deliver this future is not currently in place. Between 2025 and 2029, the industry will need to recruit an estimated 239,300 additional workers — the equivalent of almost 48,000 extra people every year. Without this influx of skills, progress on housing delivery could stall.

What the industry is telling us

Last year, MEDITE SMARTPLY partnered with the Structural Timber Association (STA) to better understand the pressures facing the UK timber sector. The findings were stark. 73 percent of UK respondents reported experiencing skilled labour shortages, with many expressing concern about attracting new entrants, the availability of apprenticeships, local training pathways and the long-term viability of the workforce.

The survey highlighted a growing disconnect between policy ambition and on-the-ground capability in the UK. While demand for timber systems continues to rise — driven by housing targets and demand for low-carbon housing — the pool of skilled workers able to deliver these systems is shrinking. An ageing workforce, coupled with lingering misconceptions about careers in construction and manufacturing, is making it increasingly difficult to bridge that gap.

Why the skills gap matters

The implications extend far beyond individual businesses. The UK's commitment to building 1.5 million new homes, alongside the implementation of the Future Homes Standard, will require faster, more efficient and more technically demanding construction processes. Timber systems are well placed to meet these needs, but only if there is sufficient ex-



perience across the supply chain — from design and engineering through to manufacturing and installation.

At the same time, younger generations are seeking careers that align with their values. Sustainability, innovation and long-term purpose matter. Timber construction offers all three, but the industry must do more to communicate that message and provide clear, accessible routes into skilled roles.

Turning challenge into opportunity

At MEDITE SMARTPLY, we believe the solution lies in collaboration — between manufacturers, educators, industry bodies and policymakers. Closing the skills gap requires more than recruitment drives; it demands sustained investment in education, hands-on learning and real-world exposure to modern timber technologies.

One example is our involvement in the Institute of Carpenters' (IOC) Timber Industry College Hub programme. In March 2025, Exeter College hosted the final event in this nationwide initiative, bringing together students, educators, industry leaders and aspiring carpenters and joiners. The event was attended by Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Gloucester, Royal Patron of the IOC, highlighting the importance of preparing the next generation for careers in carpentry and joinery.

The programme focused on practical learning and industry insight. Students took part in workshops, demonstrations and

mentoring sessions, gaining first-hand exposure to modern timber technologies, sustainable forestry and evolving career pathways. MEDITE SMARTPLY contributed by sharing expertise on MDF and OSB production and the role that engineered wood panels play in contemporary construction. Crucially, the event helped bridge the gap between education and employment, giving students direct access to potential employers and mentors.

Learning through making

Skills development is not limited to traditional construction pathways. In the Netherlands, MEDITE SMARTPLY has partnered with SintLucas, a leading creative vocational school, on a series of practical design projects. Students are challenged to design and build outdoor installations using MEDITE TRICOYA EXTREME, working with real briefs and real end users — in this case, residents of the Vitalis Brunswijk care complex.

These projects introduce students to durable, low-carbon materials while encouraging creative thinking and social impact. By working with wood-based panels early in their education, students develop a deeper understanding of sustainability, material performance and future-proof design — skills that are increasingly valuable across architecture, construction and design disciplines.

Investing in the future workforce

MEDITE SMARTPLY is also supporting higher education through

a €250,000 donation to TU Dublin, helping establish the new Design + Construct centre. The facility will focus on collaborative, multidisciplinary learning across architecture, engineering and construction, with an emphasis on off-site and modular construction, as well as near-zero energy buildings.

The SMARTPLY Hub within the centre will give students hands-on access to modern timber technologies, supporting research, innovation and applied learning. Initiatives like this are critical in ensuring graduates leave education with skills, confidence and mindset needed to support the next phase of construction — one defined by low-carbon design, modern methods of construction and long-term performance.

Building what comes next

The scale of the skills challenge facing construction should not be underestimated. But neither should the opportunity it presents. By investing in people, promoting collaboration and showcasing the timber sector as a modern, innovative career pathway, the industry can turn today's labour shortage into tomorrow's competitive advantage.

Building the next generation is about more than filling vacancies. It's about creating a workforce ready to deliver sustainable, high-quality buildings at scale — and ensuring that timber, and the people behind it, are central to that future.

MEDITE SMARTPLY UK Ltd
mdfosb.com/en

The complete woodworking CAD/CAM software solution, from design to manufacture

Powerful user-friendly CAM software
for programming CNC routers

ALPHACAM

From simple routed parts to complex, 5-axis furniture components, ALPHACAM can make your CNC router perform better than you thought possible.

- Advanced routing
- 2-5 axis machining
- Full machine simulation
- Powerful nesting
- Reusable machining styles

Find out more alphacam.com



The industry standard CAD software in casegoods manufacturing

CABINET VISION

From cutlists, renderings, shop drawings, bidding and pricing, to CNC output, CABINET VISION makes the easy jobs simple and the complex ones possible.

- Custom cabinet and room designs
- Photo realistic renderings
- Material Optimisation
- Full costing direct from design
- Cutlists and bill of materials

Find out more cabinetvision.com



3D point cloud enables robots to “see” in the carpentry industry

LIKE MANY other industries, the woodworking sector faces a variety of challenges. These include quality assurance, untapped efficiency potential, and a shortage of skilled workers.

One possible response is further automation. Automation can reduce errors, improve quality, and increase efficiency. In addition, production can be increased and accelerated because machines can operate 24/7 and perform quality control faster and more precisely than humans. Finally, the increasingly scarce human resources can be deployed more purposefully by automating monotonous and physically demanding tasks.

HOMAG Bohrsysteme GmbH has developed an automated solution that addresses these challenges. The company is part of the HOMAG Group and provides customers in the woodworking industry with a wide range of support options through its high-tech machines and systems. Its product portfolio includes CNC machining centers, through-feed drilling machines, drilling and dowel-insertion machines, as well as machines for drilling and fitting insertion technology.

The newly developed solution focuses on fully automated loading of a vertical CNC machining centre. At the literal centre of the system is a robot that picks wooden workpieces from a stack, feeds them into the CNC machine, and removes and places them af-



Robotic cell for fully autonomous machining of workpieces. Copyright: HOMAG.

ter processing. The key feature is that the workpieces are all individual and their shape and size are not known in advance. In addition, they are arranged chaotically on the stack. Furthermore, not only are the workpieces different from one another, but each must also be drilled individually. The relevant information is stored in a barcode on the workpiece.

Machine vision enables processing to take place completely autonomously despite these challenges. With the help of the machine vision software MVTec HALCON, the robot can recognize the

different workpieces and grasp them safely. The software executes numerous algorithms and also reads the barcode information on the workpieces, forwarding it to the CNC machine. Based on this information, the required, different drilling operations are carried out.

The requirement: fully automate a labor-intensive process step

Such a fully automated cell developed by HOMAG is in operation at the carpentry workshop of MAB Möbel AG. The company from Muotathal, Switzerland, has been producing quality furniture since 1951 based on ecological and design-oriented principles. “We want to continue developing with solutions that truly make sense. The further development of the cell with laser scanning and chaotic stacking was the function we had been waiting for. This allows the cell to meet our goal of batch size 1 production — and only then does automation make sense for us,” explains Luca Zingg, member of the management board responsible for corporate development at MAB. Until now, an employee handled the loading of the CNC machining centre. This

involved picking up the workpieces, scanning the attached barcode, placing them into the CNC machine, and depositing them on another pallet after processing. After several hours, this monotonous task becomes physically demanding and is not particularly efficient in terms of profitability.

Tobias Schwarz, senior director product development at HOMAG Bohrsysteme GmbH, explains the goal of the automation: “MAB has set itself the objective of increasing productivity, deploying employees more effectively — and above all in less physically demanding workplaces — and thereby reducing costs. Another advantage of a fully automated production process is that the workpieces no longer need to be sorted before processing, since the application can also handle chaotically arranged stacks. This saves time in the upstream process step, which further increases productivity.”

The challenge during implementation was to develop a completely new solution, as nothing like this previously existed on the market. The task is also not easy for the machine vision system. This is due, firstly, to the



After gripping, the robot feeds the component into the CNC machining centres. Copyright: HOMAG.

enormous variety of workpieces — different surface decors must also be processed. Secondly, the image processing must function under ambient light. Because not every area is fully illuminated, less powerful vision systems may have difficulty determining the exact position of the workpieces. Finally, it is technically demanding to separate the surfaces of relatively flat boards. “Despite these challenges, it was clear that such a fully automated solution had to be based on machine vision. We had to teach the robot to see. With other technologies, such as sensors, practical implementation would be virtually impossible — particularly in terms of speed,” explains Mr Schwarz.

A 3D point cloud enables the robot to recognize individual workpieces

The application consists of several hardware components. At its core is a six-axis robot. A vacuum surface gripper system is used as an end effector. A 3D laser scanner is also mounted on the robot’s gripper arm. The drilling operations take place in the DRILLTEQ V-310 CNC machining centre from HOMAG. The machining centre offers a wide range of options for precise processing of wooden workpieces.

For the machine vision software, HOMAG chose MVTec HALCON. “We have been working with MVTec’s software for some time. HALCON has a huge pool of machine vision operators that allow virtually all machine vision applications to be implemented robustly. In addition, the software is flexible when it comes to combining different hardware components. And if technical questions arise, you can simply contact MVTec’s customer service,” explains Mr Schwarz regarding the decision.

At MAB, the production process proceeds as follows: An employee places wooden workpieces onto an unknown and chaotic stack in the work area. The robot then moves over the stack so that the 3D laser scanner can scan it from above. The laser scanner then creates a 3D point cloud — a highly precise three-dimensional representation of objects consisting of numerous individual data points. After image acquisition, the machine vision software MVTec HALCON extracts the top layer of wooden workpieces from the 3D point cloud



MAB Möbel AG, whose carpentry is where the robotic cell is deployed, manufactures traditional and modern high-quality furniture. Copyright: MAB.

and determines the spatial position of each individual workpiece. A stacking algorithm then calculates the optimal order in which the robot should remove the workpieces. This is an important detail because an unevenly unloaded stack could collapse. The robot then begins its work, removing the wooden workpieces according to the calculated order and transferring them to the CNC machining centre. Before this, the 3D laser scanner captures a 2D image of the code. MVTec HALCON reads the code and transmits the information to the machine. The workpiece is then processed according to this information. Afterward, the robot picks up the workpiece again and places it on the target stack.

MVTec HALCON performs multiple image processing tasks

“We are seeing machine vision becoming increasingly popular in the woodworking industry and among carpentry workshops. Our software, MVTec HALCON, offers numerous methods — for example for inspection tasks or for collaboration with robots — that can sustainably support automation and digitalisation in this sector,” says Jan Gärtner, product manager HALCON at MVTec.

For the robot in the MAB system to work autonomously and grasp the workpieces precisely, the machine vision software must perform several tasks. First, MVTec

HALCON converts the 3D point cloud into information for further processing. For this purpose, HALCON uses 3D object models. This central container forms the starting point for creating a coordinate system within the machine vision software, which is then transmitted to the robot. Various HALCON operators first determine the distance from the gripper to the pallet, then calculate the top layer of workpieces, and finally determine the precise position of each individual workpiece. These positions are integrated into the coordinate system of the HALCON machine vision software and transferred to the robot.

During the 3D scanner’s capture of the top layer of the pallet, it also records 2D images. HALCON uses these images to read the information from the barcode attached to each workpiece. The challenge here is that the captured image is quite large, while the barcode region is correspondingly small. Reading such small barcodes is a major challenge for any industrial image processing software. “The image-processing part of the implementation was not entirely trivial. Because of the flat boards, we had to combine 2D and 3D methods. This was possible with HALCON and significantly simplified the implementation,” explains Mr Schwarz.

System Completed in Summer 2025

The system went into operation at MAB Möbel AG in summer 2025. “Thanks to the close coordination with the partners involved, we were able to achieve very good results right from commissioning. The system is now operating very reliably, which makes us very satisfied and gives us confidence for the future,” explains Luca Zingg.

“The increased level of automation significantly relieves MAB, as the employees who previously carried out this task can now focus on other, more important activities. At the same time, this solution represents an important development for us, because it allows us to significantly increase the automation level of our core machines and thus offer customers additional added value,” adds Tobias Schwarz, continuing: “Machine vision plays an important role here, because the technology acts as an automation enabler. In our collaboration with MVTec, we see the opportunity to offer our customers first-class and reliable solutions.”

MVTec Software GmbH
www.mvtec.com

New design software at Benchmarkx

A LEADING UK kitchen supplier is updating its design software to increase the speed and level of service it can provide to its customers.

Benchmarkx Kitchens & Joinery, which is part of the Travis Perkins Group, has invested in new design software to vastly improve the pace at which its team members can produce kitchen designs, with the new drawings also far superior in quality.

The new software, ArtiCAD, will significantly boost Benchmarkx's operation, with it now being possible to plan and render a kitchen design in

under 10 minutes, with the CGI designs giving customers state-of-the-art, realistic visuals.

The software will make it quicker to go from design to the final price, which will benefit both colleagues and customers. The rollout of the ArtiCAD software has been three years in the planning and almost 300 team members across the country will have undertaken extensive training to use the tool by the time it reaches all branches by June.

ArtiCAD is also delivering in-person pop-up hubs to support Benchmarkx colleagues nationwide to ensure a faultless transition from the previous software.

Rosie Wise, Benchmarkx Kitchens & Joinery managing director, said: "We are thrilled to now be using ArtiCAD for our kitchen designs. The rollout is currently under way and it is having a huge impact on our ability to service our customers more effectively in the branches already using it. The new software is user friendly, and with our kitchen designers now able to plan and render kitchens so much quicker, both our homeowner and trade customers will see the benefits. With greater quality CGI designs, ArtiCAD is going to produce more visually engaging kitchen drawings, giving customers a more realistic view of the final product.

"With this exciting change to the way we operate, we have received a lot of support from ArtiCAD's training team — as well as our own — to ensure all our designers and managers are comfortable with the software."

Benchmarkx Kitchens & Joinery
www.benchmarkxkitchens.co.uk



PANELS & SURFACES

Rocking CaberAcoustic for a quiet life

FAVOURED by specifiers who need to consider solutions to noise pollution in today's busy, building world, CaberAcoustic from West Fraser is a versatile, economical sound-reducing flooring system which reduces both impact and airborne transmitted sounds.

It can be laid over concrete and timber floors and is available in 18 mm and 22 mm thicknesses. Recommended to be laid and fitted with D3 PVA glue in the tongue and groove joints, CaberAcoustic achieves 19 dB reduction in sound transference when installed on its own; it reduces sound but will not completely proof buildings from the transference of sound. Greater reductions are reached when used within a system for noise transference reductions. There are three flooring systems, CaberFloor P5, CaberDek, and CaberShield Eco, detailed on the West Fraser UK website – uk.westfraser.com.

CaberAcoustic cannot be fitted directly on to flooring joists; it is an overlay board and should always be laid, felt side down, as a floating floor directly on top of an existing flooring deck. The felt that is bonded to the underside of the chipboard is environmentally friendly as it is made from recycled fibres.

Are any other co-products needed?

CaberFloor P5, CaberDek or CaberShield Eco should be used in conjunction with CaberAcoustic in new build projects. For renovations, CaberAcoustic can be used on top of the existing floor.

West Fraser

Tel 01786 812921

<https://uk.westfraser.com/>

Photo courtesy of Unsplash.

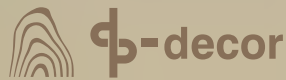




the
decorative
panels
group

YOUR PERFECT PARTNER

Nature Inspired Paper Foils



dp-decor is the **original** and trusted paper foil range from Decorative Panels Lamination - developed as a cost-effective yet visually stunning alternative to real wood veneers.

The collection features an extensive selection of **woodgrain**, **unicolour**, and **fantasy designs**, developed in partnership with leading global print houses.

www.decorativepanels.co.uk



A bespoke kitchen for a historic toll house

James Latham supports Prestige Interior Projects in specifying premium Cleaf surfaces for a unique renovation challenge

WHEN Prestige Interior Projects took on the renovation of a private residence incorporating a historic toll house, the brief faced an unusual design challenge. Working closely with James Latham, director Bradley Jeffries specified two complementary Cleaf melamine finishes, Azimut (S022 Portland) for the tall units and Cheope (FB49 Glauco), for the base units.

The materials needed to balance contrasting client prefer-



ences while delivering a contemporary kitchen that respected the character of the original octagonal building. The result is a carefully considered design that seamlessly bridges heritage and modern living. Taking a closer look at the project ...

Where heritage meets contemporary design

The clients wanted a kitchen that would feel at home within their modern extension, while remaining sensitive to the character of the original toll house. Adding to

the complexity, the two clients had opposing aesthetic preferences: one favoured darker tones, the other lighter finishes.

The kitchen forms part of a bright, open-plan living space with plentiful natural light, yet the kitchen area itself has no direct



window. Compounding this, the design needed to complement a premium stone surface the clients had purchased several years earlier, a material that had already become central to the overall design of the home.

Bradley Jeffries knew that selecting the right materials would be critical to the success of the project.

From design challenge to technical excellence

Bradley specified Cleaf Azimut (S022 Portland) for the tall units, a lighter panel with natural timber grain, and Cleaf Cheope (FB49 Glauco) for the base units, a darker panel featuring a subtle diamond pattern.

This pattern subtly echoes the octagonal geometry of the original toll house, creating a visual link between the old and new.

"The diamonds in the FB49 complement that odd octagonal shape of the old toll house," explains Bradley. "It's a subtle little detail that pulls the toll house into the new extension."

The dual-colour approach achieved multiple objectives. Using the lighter Portland on the larger tall units helped maintain a sense of openness, while the darker Glauco grounded the base units, creating balance and satisfying both clients' colour preferences. Importantly, both finishes harmonised perfectly with the pre-selected stone.



Technical excellence in fabrication

Beyond aesthetics, Cleaf delivered unexpected technical advantages during fabrication. Bradley found the boards significantly outperformed the standard materials he typically uses for internal components.

"It's a very strong, solid material," he says. "It's heavier than some of the more recognised melamine brands, and crucially, it stays straight when cut."

Unlike lower-cost boards that can bow or distort once machined, Cleaf maintained its integrity, resulting in cleaner lines and a superior overall finish. The deep textured surfaces also add

depth, with subtle undulations that catch and reflect light across the grain.

The art of grain matching

One of the most impressive technical achievements of the project was the precision grain matching across multiple boards. Several kitchen runs exceeded the length of a single sheet, requiring meticulous alignment.

Bradley successfully grain-matched both the Portland's timber grain and the Glauco's diamond pattern, vertically and horizontally, across doors formed from multiple sheets, a detail that elevates the finished kitchen and reinforces its bespoke quality.

A 12-month journey

From initial discussions to final installation, the project took approximately 12 months. This allowed Bradley, Leonie Jeffries and the wider Prestige Interior Projects team to fully develop the design, source premium Cleaf materials through James Latham, and deliver the installation with exceptional attention to detail.

The result is a kitchen that successfully bridges two architectural worlds, balancing light and dark, heritage and contemporary design, while delivering the lasting quality Prestige Interior Projects is known for.

Looking ahead

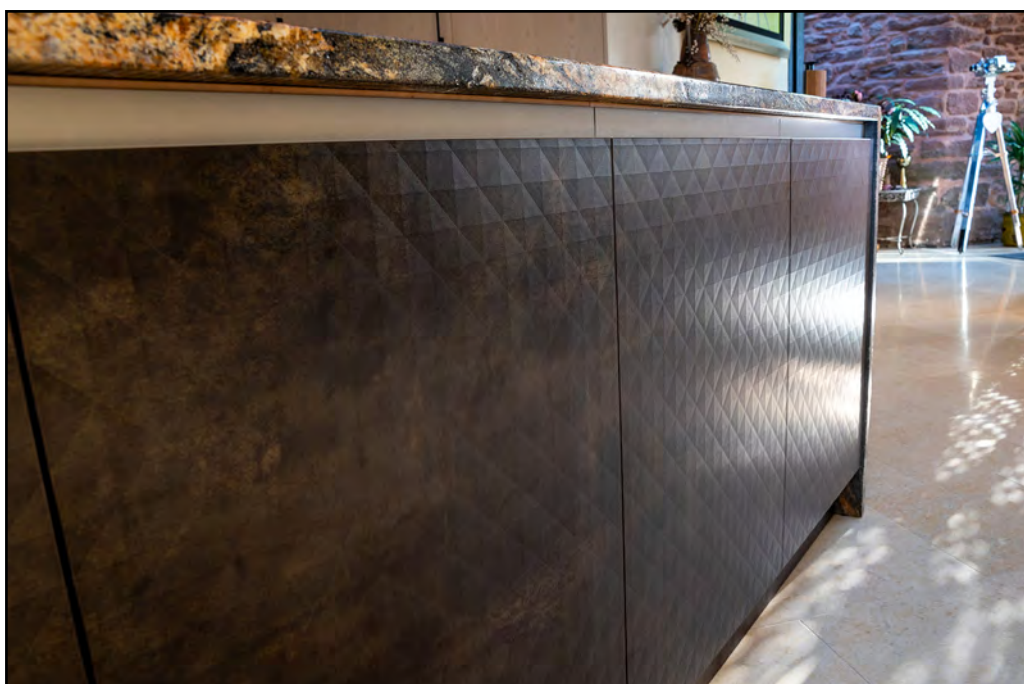
Based on the performance of Cleaf in this project, Bradley now recommends it for all display applications where quality and longevity matter.

"I'd always offer Cleaf for anything that's on show," he confirms. "It's a premium brand product, slightly more expensive than the alternatives, but the quality justifies it. For high-end projects where clients want furniture that lasts, it's the right choice."

Prestige Interior Projects
www.prestigeinteriors.co.uk

Cleaf
cleaf.it/en/

James Latham
www.lathamtimber.co.uk



West Fraser — supporting UK housebuilders with digital resources and an interactive product guide

WEST FRASER, a leading manufacturer of engineered wood panels for the UK construction and housebuilding sectors, continues to support customers with a suite of digital tools — including a highly popular downloadable checklist for housebuilders and an interactive product guide that has proven popular with housebuilders and specifiers.

The comprehensive checklist, designed to help specifiers and site teams select the most suitable panel products from floor to roof, remains one of West Fraser's most widely accessed resources. It forms part of a collection of specialist materials created specifically for housebuilders and available through the company's website.

The dedicated housebuilder webpage offers:

- A fully interactive downloadable product guide.
- A builder's guide to choosing the right wood panels.
- Fact sheets on SterlingOSB Zero and CaberShield Eco.
- Options to order product samples and ask questions.

Navigation is simple: clicking the side tabs reveals product categories, application guidance, and technical data.

This intuitive format makes it easier than ever for builders, designers, and procurement teams to identify the right panel solution for any project.

The guide covers all products within the SterlingOSB Zero, CaberFloor, and CaberMDF ranges, bringing together essential technical specifications, installation guidance, and performance information. It also highlights the wide scope of applications for West Fraser's engineered wood panels — including roofing, flooring, walling, timber framing, hoarding, shopfitting, furniture manufacture, mouldings, and packaging.

With clear, practical information and easy-to-use digital tools, West Fraser continues to support the UK housebuilding community with resources that simplify product choice, improve efficiency, and promote best practice across every stage of construction. Paper copies of the guide, which also encompasses contact information for general enquiries and technical expertise, can be requested from the company's website.

West Fraser

Tel 01786 812 921

<https://uk.westfraser.com>



Snaidero displays Abode in new London design space

ABODE, an award-winning designer and distributor of market leading kitchen sinks and taps, bathroom taps, and showering solutions, is thrilled to announce its new partnership with Snaidero Projects UK.

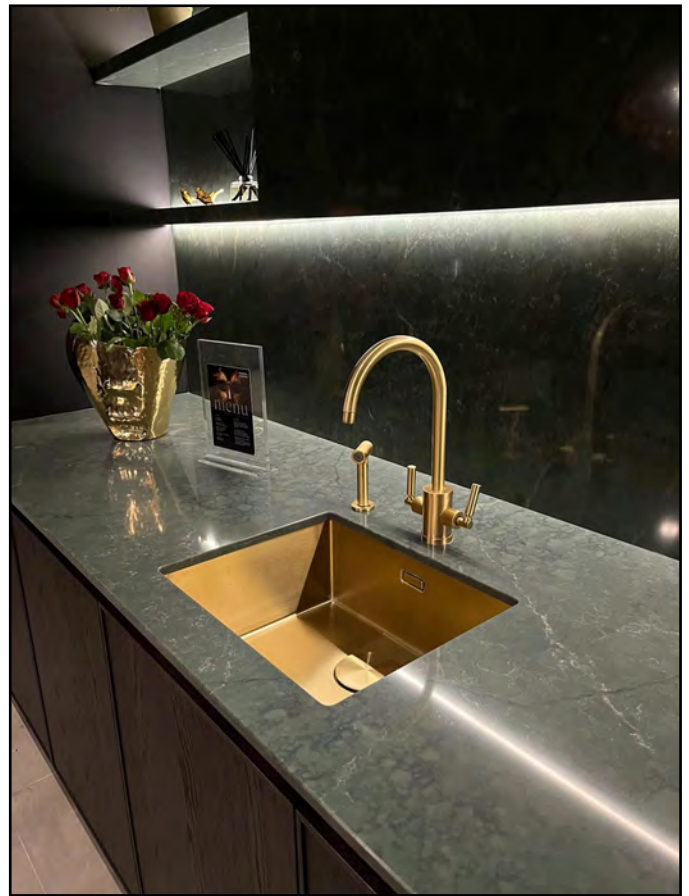
Specialists in designing home interiors that redefine luxury and elevate everyday living, Snaidero Projects UK is proud to revolutionise bespoke kitchen design by selecting Abode for its brand-new design space, suitably located on the Greenwich Peninsula in the heart of London's Design District.

Keith Barker, CEO of Snaidero Projects UK explains, "I am very proud to introduce our new purpose-built kitchen design space to housebuilders and property developers in London and the Southeast. For developers, imagining how future buyers or renters will feel is essential and our showroom makes that experience real. Launched at the end of last year, several key customers were invited to explore our new design quarters, view our products, and ultimately discuss future project opportunities with our in-house team of designers. We work with a large collection of developers

throughout London such as the Berkeley Group, St. George South London, Catalyst and others, and we look forward to establishing the range of Abode products throughout Snaidero kitchen projects moving forward."

Matthew Miller, sales director LVA at Snaidero Projects UK adds, "Our new design space has been in the making for some time and last summer, Keith and I met with Graeme from Abode when the building was just an empty shell. We didn't want to be just another kitchen showroom but instead, a unique design space that balances our architectural vision and eye for exceptional design. With this in mind, Abode sinks and taps were a natural fit for Snaidero as, like us, they help create kitchens that not only inspire but also bring uncompromising quality to every project."

Helping to add to the sensory experience at Snaidero Projects' new London design space, the range of Abode products on display include the durable Koto Single Bowl Sink with Nano PVD Technology, Atlas Aquifer Water Filter Tap and Click Handspray in matching Brushed Brass for a



truly bespoke look and feel. The second roomset features Abode's R15 Matrix Extra Large Stainless Steel Sink and Hex Dual Lever Mixer Tap, which is finished in cool Brushed Nickel to provide an alternative to the deep, brass kitchen display.

No matter the brief or price point, each roomset is designed to help customers realise their next kitchen project with carefully selected Snaidero cabinets and doors, designer sinks and taps by Abode, alongside Hendl & Hendl architectural ironmongery solutions, and Fisher & Paykel appliances, to allow buyers to experience the quality, and visualise how minimalist design maximises space.

The Abode 'Tap Bar' helps form the Snaidero selection area, where customers that demand key components in a variety of designs, styles, and finishes are free to explore a prime selection of kitchen taps and handsprays. Popular models on display include the modern Althia Single Lever Tap in brand-new Dark

Bronze finish, the classic Ludlow Monobloc Mixer Tap in Antique Brass that complements more traditional design schemes, and the Genio Semi-Professional Pull-around Tap in sophisticated Matt Black finish, which combines functionality and style.

Graeme Blythe, national contracts manager at Abode says, "We are thrilled to collaborate with Snaidero Projects UK, which we have worked closely with on several high-profile developments over the last few years such as The Stage in Shoreditch, and a regeneration project in Elephant & Castle. As London continues to be regarded as a global hub for leading design and architecture, we're thrilled to heighten our presence in the capital by assisting Snaidero with an exclusive mix of Abode sinks and taps, which demonstrate the scope and versatility of our products."

Abode

Tel 01226 283434

info@abodedesigns.co.uk
abodedesigns.co.uk

Sustainable style with CRL Stone's new Silica Free Collection





IDEAL if you want the look and quality of quartz in a sustainable, silica-free format, this new collection of beautiful, durable and hardwearing surfaces is designed to exceed all the requirements of modern living.

Answering growing demand for stylish and sustainable surfaces that are mindfully manufactured, CRL Stone's Silica Free surfaces are made using minerals and glass

rather than quartz. Scratch, heat and stain resistant, CRL Stone's Silica Free surfaces provide all the great qualities that have made its Quartz Collection so popular.

The perfect blend of style and practicality, CRL Stone's versatile new Silica Free Collection is made up of five stone- and marble-inspired designs that will take centre stage in classic as well as contemporary homes. Take your pick

from the bold and beautiful Arabescato Vagli; dreamy light and luminous Barletta; naturally elegant Modena; eye-catching Statuario Oro; and Taj Mahal, which features warm, rich, earthy tones.

This stunning new collection is showcased in an easy-to-browse micro brochure, launched in perfect time to inspire all those spring renovation projects. Packed with aspirational photography, this

handy guide provides full technical information to make it easy to incorporate CRL Stone's Silica Free Collection into all your designs.

Available in jumbo slabs measuring 3,200 x 1,600 mm, CRL Stone's Silica Free surfaces have a polished finish and come in thicknesses of 20 mm and 30 mm.

CRL Stone
Tel 01706 863600
www.crlstone.co.uk



Bushboard unveils refreshed Options kitchen worktops range to support installers



BUSHBOARD, a leading manufacturer of innovative kitchen surfaces, has unveiled a refreshed identity for its long-established Options kitchen worktops range — reinforcing its commitment to provide trade customers and installers with trusted, reliable and highly practical solutions.

This new collection, featuring 25 bestselling decors, combines worktops together with coordinating accessories, into one easy to spec category solution trade customers can rely on time and time again.

The refreshed Options range delivers best in class style, performance and affordability; helping trade customers drive sell through and installers specify with confidence — so projects stay efficient from start to finish.



The updated range includes dependable designs and is available in two profiles to suit varying project needs. The Light 28 mm Postformed range offers a lightweight option that's easy to handle, quick to install and ideal for value-driven projects, while the Plus 38 mm Postformed range provides a deeper profile for enhanced durability and a more substantial look.

Reflecting the latest interior trends, the range introduces wood tones such as Warm Walnut Block and Colmar Oak, timeless stones including Solar Quartzstone and Marquina Marble, and more modern neutrals like Pure White and Pewter Dust.

The collection includes a comprehensive choice of finishes in wood grain, stone, satin, matt and gloss, which further supports trade professionals in choosing the perfect finish for style, durability and customer satisfaction.

To continue the brand's approach to streamlining specification and fitting processes, the Options range of matching worktops, breakfast bars, splashbacks and upstands, also includes a choice of 16 colourmatched sealants and a high-strength adhesive, allowing installers to achieve

a cohesive look across every project.

Nick Jones, director worktops EMEA at Bushboard, said: "With 90 years of experience, our legacy continues through the continued innovation we apply to product development and design.

"As we celebrate our 90th anniversary, we're proud to relaunch our much-loved Options range, renowned for its affordability and

durability. The updated collection has been designed with every stage of the supply chain in mind, from installers to customers.

"We feel that the modernised line will enable merchants to continue trusting Bushboard products as a brand dedicated to supporting fast installation and low maintenance, long lasting materials."

All Options work surfaces in-

clude a lifetime guarantee, built-in antibacterial protection that reduces bacteria by up to 99.9%, and materials that are low maintenance and easy to install. Together, these benefits provide durability and peace of mind for both installers and end users.

Bushboard Options
www.wilsonart.co.uk/wilsonart-bushboard



West Fraser's weather-resistant CaberShield Eco

CONTINUALLY investing in the improvement of its engineered wood-based panel products, West Fraser has received new BBA certification, confirming its environmentally-friendly CaberShield Eco is capable of withstanding constant exposure to the elements for a full sixty days: comfortably delivering extended practical and economic advantages for contractors and developers seeking an edge on the competition.

The latest addition to an already comprehensive portfolio, CaberShield Eco is the greenest option on the market for creating high specification, weather resistant floors which simultaneously provide a slip resistant, safe working platform, also able to shield the spaces below from rain and snow so that work can proceed while the main roof and the rest of the envelope are made weathertight.

Rigorous evaluation has proved that the inherent performance characteristics of the CaberFloor P5 are boosted by the solvent-free, UV-cured, waterproof coating across the upper surface to CaberShield Eco. This means the panels — along with the tongue & groove versions — will withstand high traffic along with the worst of the winter weather during the exposed construction phase.

Together with the boards' own structure, this outstanding resilience is facilitated by an installation process featuring the use of West Fraser's CaberFix D4 glue, which is applied to the edges as well as across the joists. In addition, from an environmental perspective, the panels' speci-

fication cuts Scope 3 emissions when compared to melamine protected flooring.

Manufactured in dimensions of 2,400 mm long by 600 mm wide, the panels are both FSC and CE certified and are ideal for humid environments, in commercial as well as residential applications, for new-build and refurbishment work.

The T&G profile panels, meanwhile, measure 22 mm thick; and West Fraser recommends securing them using its tried and tested CaberFix D4, a solvent-free, one-component polyurethane adhesive. This 'joint & joint' glue, when applied to the edges, has the advantage of eliminating those irritating creaks and squeaks which characterise traditional floorboards.

In common with other products in the West Fraser range, CaberShield Eco is produced using timber from responsibly managed forest sources, locking in the CO₂ 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.

West Fraser

Tel 01786 812921

<https://uk.westfraser.com/>



High-quality flooring installations

LEICESTERSHIRE-based construction business, WP Developments Leicestershire Limited, now in its tenth year of trading, continues to specify West Fraser's CaberDek and SterlingOSB Zero as its preferred flooring solutions across new build residential projects.

The firm recently completed the flooring works for 20 new-build homes on a David Wilson Homes development in Wigston, North Leicestershire. CaberDek and SterlingOSB Zero were used to deck out all joists across the plots, forming the structural base for finished floors and providing a robust working surface for follow-on trades.

"Consistency and reliability are key for us, especially on larger multi plot projects," William Woolhouse explained. "CaberDek and SterlingOSB Zero give us confidence that the finished floor will stand up to site conditions and deliver the performance expected by major housebuilders. The product quality is consistent, performance on site reliable and we have complete confidence in the finished floor, which is obviously crucial. For us, it's important that sheet materials feel solid underfoot and behave predictably from one board to the next. CaberDek and SterlingOSB Zero deliver exactly that."

In general, there are a host of reasons the company specifies the West Fraser collection. Speed of installation allows the teams to progress quickly and efficiently while the finish is dependable and durable even before the final floor coverings are installed. This combination of speed and predictability helps maintain programme momentum on multi plot developments where efficiency is critical. "They're easy to handle, cut and fix," William added. "Because they work so well with our standard workflow, there's no disruption or need to adapt how we operate."

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 812921 ● [Uk.westfraser.com](https://uk.westfraser.com)



Digital guide to timber frame construction launched by TDUK, STA and Swedish Wood

THREE leading organisations in the construction sector — Timber Development UK (TDUK), the Structural Timber Association (STA) and Swedish Wood — have launched a new digital platform that makes timber frame construction easier for built environment professionals to understand and adopt.

Timber Frame: Where to Start is a practical, accessible guide that provides a clear introduction to timber frame construction and its principal elements. The purpose of the guide is simple: to give users a quick and easy way to understand how timber frame works, while signposting them to credible and accessible information.

Designed for anyone interested in timber frame construction, the guide supports a wide audience. It will be particularly useful for architects, specifiers, engineers, timber frame suppliers, building operators, home builders and contractors. It also serves as a straightforward introduction for those new to timber frame who want reliable information in one place.

Timber frame is a proven, reliable and mainstream method of construction, fully supported by warranty providers, lenders and insurers. In Scotland, 92% of all



new-build homes are constructed using timber frame. Seven of the top ten UK homebuilders operate their own timber frame manufacturing facilities, and it has been predicted that as many as one in three UK homes could be timber frame by 2030.

With the top construction companies now moving towards greater use of timber frame, and

many smaller firms beginning that transition, the demand for clear and practical guidance is clear. This new digital guide has been created to help companies build confidently in timber, providing the insight needed to deliver successful projects and positive experiences with the system.

Dave Hopkins, chief executive of Timber Development UK, said:

“Timber frame is no longer an alternative method of construction. It is a mainstream solution that supports productivity and sustainability. This guide brings together the information businesses need to get started, all in one accessible place.”

Andrew Orriss, CEO of the Structural Timber Association, added: “There is a growing appetite across the sector to build more in timber. The challenge for many organisations is knowing where to begin. *Timber Frame: Where to Start* provides a clear route in, backed by trusted industry bodies and credible information.”

Stephen King, UK project manager, Swedish Wood, commented: “As a long-standing supplier of structural timber to the UK market, we’re seeing strong growth in demand for timber frame construction. By supporting this initiative, we’re helping ensure that companies looking to build in timber have the confidence, knowledge and supply chain support they need to do it well.”

The digital platform reflects a shared commitment from TDUK, STA and Swedish Wood to support industry growth, encourage informed decision-making and promote high standards across the sector.

Timber Frame
<https://timber-frame.uk>



Grade II Listed farm house restored with natural building materials

A HISTORIC Grade II Listed farm house in the Lake District, dating from the mid-17th century, has undergone an extensive renovation with building products from Ecological Building Systems to create a well insulated and energy-efficient sustainable home.

Main contractor Niensens Ltd and architects O'Neil Associates collaborated closely with Ecological Building Systems to identify sustainable materials and methods that would improve comfort and energy use while still protecting the building's fabric.

Their approach focused on ensuring that the restored structure would be watertight and airtight, yet fully vapour permeable, allowing the solid walls to breathe. The aesthetic qualities of the materials, internally and externally, were also carefully considered to ensure that the completed work blended with the historic features.

A key component of the restoration was the use of Pro Clima Intello Plus, a hygrosafe airtight vapour control membrane. This specialist membrane allows up to 100 times more moisture vapour to pass through when humidity levels rise, for example due to back drying of moisture



vapour through the building element in the summer. This helps protect the building fabric from moisture-related damage, while eliminating the risk of condensation and mould within the living spaces.

To complete the airtight layer, Pro Clima Tescon Vana tape was used on membrane overlaps, edges and penetrations. Its solid

acrylic adhesive is fully water-resistant and remains stable regardless of temperature or humidity changes, creating a robust and long-lasting seal expected to perform for 100 years.

To enhance thermal performance, Gutex Thermoroom natural wood fibre insulation boards from Ecological Building Systems were selected for the internal wall

insulation at the farm house. Manufactured from recycled waste wood chips, this fully breathable insulation board provides excellent thermal improvement, sound insulation and a healthy indoor environment by allowing moisture to pass through the building fabric rather than becoming trapped.

In the cattle shed and barn, Ecological Building Systems' Diasen Diathonite Thermactive.037, a lime- and cork-based insulating plaster, was applied by Border Lime Construction. Its capillary-active and highly vapour-open nature makes it especially well suited to older solid-wall buildings. The plaster helps walls regulate moisture and dry naturally, reducing the risk of condensation and mould while providing strong thermal performance.

Diasen Diathonite Thermactive.037 helps to retain heat, improving year-round comfort. A 50 mm application can enhance a wall's thermal performance by up to four times, and its elasticity, which is around ten times greater than that of conventional plasters, helps to prevent cracking and supports the long-term durability of the restored building.

Neil Turner, UK technical manager at Ecological Building Systems, shares: "Diasen Diathonite





Thermactive.037 is well suited to major internal renovations of historic buildings and solid wall construction, such as The Farmstead Project. In this case, it was specified as part of a wider retrofit strategy to help manage moisture while improving thermal performance. Working closely with O'Neil Associates allowed the building to be upgraded to modern performance requirements while retaining vapour-open, compatible materials."

Bob O'Neil, architect and owner at O'Neil Associates, explains: "One of the key successes of this project was involving Ecological Building Systems from the very beginning to model and refine our thermal performance strategy. Their expertise in working with heritage buildings was invaluable in ensuring this older building could be upgraded to modern airtightness standards while maintaining appropriate moisture management. It was our first time using Diasen Diathonite Thermactive.037 and having a member of Ecological Building Systems' technical team onsite ensured we achieved the best possible results."

Originally built as a two-unit dwelling with an attached cow house, the farmstead has gradually been transformed over the centuries as the needs of the farm evolved. In the 18th century, the property was extended with the addition of the shippon/cattle shed and further enhanced with neoclassical design features.

The 19th century saw the construction of a large threshing barn to the south and the east barn, followed by the addition of steel-clad agricultural sheds during the 20th century. By the time the new owners acquired the 500-acre site, the farmstead had deteriorated to the point where significant conservation work was required to make it habitable again.

The new owners' vision was to breathe life back into the farm, creating a sustainable and low-carbon farmhouse that supported their wider regenerative farming ambitions. Achieving this meant upgrading the building to modern standards of thermal performance and airtightness

without compromising the integrity of its significant historic fabric, a challenge for any conservation-led project.

Since the completion of the works, the farmhouse and its associated buildings, including the converted cattle shed and east barn, now produce just 3.7 tonnes of CO₂ per year. This represents a significant improvement, performing far better than the average UK home, which produces around 6 tonnes. The restoration project demonstrates how historic buildings can be thoughtfully upgraded to meet today's sustainability demands without sacrificing the qualities that make them architecturally and culturally important.

Ecological Building Systems has grown significantly over the years, supplying innovative, natural and high-quality building materials, supporting construction professionals and architects in delivering projects that meet sustainability goals.

Ecological Building Systems
info@ecologicalbuildingsystems.com
ecologicalbuildingsystems.com



West Fraser marked Earth Day 2026 with industry leading action on forest protection, transparency, and net zero progress

AS EARTH DAY 2026 (22 April) called on governments and businesses worldwide to take bolder action to protect forests and the climate, West Fraser is highlighting the major advances the company has made in strengthening due diligence, enhancing supply chain transparency, and accelerating its journey toward net zero in the UK.

As one of the world's largest producers of timber panel products, and long recognised as a leader in FSC® certification, West Fraser views official accreditations not as endpoints, but as essential foundations for a far broader environmental management strategy. Today, that strategy is embedded in every aspect of the company's procurement and sustainability operations.

Leading the way on EUDR Compliance and net zero

In alignment with Earth Day's mission to safeguard natural resources for future generations, West Fraser is making significant progress towards full compliance with the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). In the UK, the company's operations are also ahead of schedule in their transition to Net Zero.

The company has invested heavily in strengthening systems, procedures and continuous auditing, all overseen by Kevin Thomas, wood manager (pictured), who plays a central role in ensuring rigorous due diligence across all purchasing activities.

Kevin works closely with customers and suppliers throughout each procurement cycle, providing transparency and reassurance at a time when responsible sourcing is increasingly recognised as a commercial priority. "Customers today consistently want proof that the timber they buy is legal, ethical and traceable," Kevin says. "That level of scrutiny is now just as important as price."

Technology driven transparency

To meet, and exceed, expectations, West Fraser launched a new supplier portal in 2024. The platform provides real time dashboards, risk alerts, and data driven analysis for every consignment entering UK mills.

Beyond traditional certification schemes, the company employs advanced tools including:

- Geo location polygon data from the forest floor
- Satellite imagery and environmental risk reporting
- Comprehensive species and harvesting date verification
- Audits covering machinery efficiency, fire prevention systems, and renewable energy use in harvesting zones

This elevated standard is designed to eliminate risks such as illegal timber trade, the misuse of accreditation systems, or the importation of controlled species.

Kevin Thomas notes: "While FSC® certification covers all our UK production, we go much further. Every shipment is assessed. We are far ahead of our competitors on EUDR compliance, and all our UK suppliers are now fully integrated into the polygon-based mapping system — a term few had even heard before last year."

West Fraser's due diligence extends not only to forest thinnings and responsibly harvested timber, but also to the waste wood stream, which makes up 68% of the particleboard produced in the UK. Much of this material originates from recycled pallets and timber recovered from demolition — supporting the circular economy and reducing pressure on forests. All UK manufactured panel products are net carbon negative, made with locally grown timber to reduce embodied emissions,

and produced in mills accredited to ISO 14001 environmental standards. Every UK panel is also FSC® certified (C012533).

"West Fraser is very proud of the systems we've built," Kevin concludes. "We have taken due diligence to a whole new level and remain absolutely committed to meeting and exceeding all legislation. Our goal is simple: to ensure every product we make supports the health of forests, communities, and the planet."

West Fraser

Tel 01786 812921

<https://uk.westfraser.com/>



SAVE ENERGY REDUCE COSTS

In many manufacturing facilities, extraction fans operate continuously, at full power, throughout the working day.

Even when some machines are not in use, and often during factory breaks, the powerful, energy-consuming fans continue to run at full speed – wasting valuable energy... and money!

With ECOGATE, the extraction system responds in real-time to variations in machine use. When a production machine is switched on, the greenBOX Controller opens a motorised damper to provide extraction for that particular machine.

With ECOGATE technology installed, an extraction fan will consume the minimum power required to provide optimum extraction – reducing electricity bills by 68% on average.

ECOGATE[®]


sales@ecogate.co.uk 01924 926038

www.ecogate.co.uk

Tilhill Forestry trials automated planting machine to support the future of UK woodland creation

TILHILL Forestry, a member of BSW Group, has successfully trialed the automated tree planting machine, PlantMax, to support the future delivery of new woodlands.

As demand for woodland creation increases — driven by climate goals, biodiversity recovery, timber security and sustainable land use — the forestry sector is being challenged to deliver planting programmes at scale and pace, all while maintaining high establishment standards.

The exploration of automated planting is designed to support manual planting, and the project is underpinned by Tilhill's integrated approach to forestry.

With expertise spanning tree nurseries, woodland management, harvesting operations and restocking, the business is well placed to assess mechanised planting within the wider context of seedling quality, site preparation and long-term woodland performance.

This all helps to ensure that innovation is applied responsibly and effectively — helping to strengthen the long-term resilience and delivery capacity of the UK forestry sector. Mechanised solutions are being evaluated to understand how they could aid manual, more labour-intensive planting, adding flexibility to woodland creation and restocking programmes where site conditions allow.

The trial focuses on the PlantMax automated planting system, designed by Swedish company Plantma Forestry. Assessments will help determine its potential role in restocking and woodland creation operations, with early results demonstrating the machine's ability to plant consistently well on a number of different sites at viable commercial rates. The system integrates several establishment functions, including ground scarification support and automated planting arms with adjustable compaction. Performance is being assessed as a complementary approach to established methods, covering a range of UK forestry site types and recognising that terrain, drainage and ground preparation all influence suitability.

Harry Stevens, forestry director at Tilhill Forestry, said: "Innovation like this is a critical part of the future of UK forestry. As the demand for woodland creation grows, the sector needs practical solutions that strengthen delivery resilience while maintaining the highest establishment standards. As a leading, integrated forestry business, we are uniquely placed to explore how mechanised planting can add value and support long-term woodland success.

We're excited to explore how these tools can help our fantastic planting teams continue their excellent work, while improving outcomes in hard-to-reach areas and enhancing safety."

The investment in planting innovation reflects a broader commitment to delivering sustainable forestry outcomes, supporting landowners, investors and rural communities as woodland creation expands across the UK.

With the support of BSW Group, the business continues to explore how new technologies can strengthen the full forestry lifecycle, from harvesting through to restocking and long-term woodland management.

Trials will continue over the coming seasons, and Tilhill will work with partners to validate planting quality, operational fit and the role automation may play in supporting the UK's woodland ambitions.

Tilhill Forestry
www.tilhill.com

