TGM wins Project of the Year at FIS Contractors Awards

Full event coverage and winners’ details inside

Legislation
The cash windfall that could be awaiting FIS members

Skills & Training
FIS skills clinics address fundamental funding challenge

Technical
The who, what, where, why and how of plasterboard allocation
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So make sure to contact the team for your next interiors project.
Welcome to the July edition of SpecFinish. What an eventful couple of months we’ve had!

The FIS Contractors Awards 2019 lunch at the Dorchester Hotel in London was a glittering event, and a fitting tribute to all the top performers in our industry, who’ve worked so hard to achieve the best results. Recognition of this was well deserved and we bring you a full list of winners and details about the event in our four-page special focus.

Clerkenwell Design Week celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, with new CDW branding, and many of our members were involved with this, either as exhibitors, visitors, or by association. The sun certainly shone on this year’s event and there was so much to see and ponder on – we cover this in our events section.

Another noteworthy event was the Inspiring Change Awards and Conference which recognised organisations within the construction and infrastructure sector that had created open and inclusive workplace cultures and we also bring you details of what this event had to offer.

Despite our busy events calendar, we’ve managed to gather some insightful news and advice in our health and safety, technical and legislation sections. The national shortage of plasterboard is causing unrest throughout the supply chain and our three-page focus addresses some of the questions and actions surrounding this, while our focus feature this month is on colour use within office environments – and how it can affect employee wellbeing.

Stephanie Cornwall
Editor
Welcome

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www.thefis.org

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Joe Cilia, FIS
Joe is the technical director at FIS. He provides support to members of the association, and works with relevant bodies on legislative and technical standards.

Amanda Scott, FIS
Amanda is sector skills engagement manager at FIS. She helps to organise and run skills clinics and identify areas where members would benefit from assistance and can share good practice.

Donna Taylor, PPG
Donna Taylor is principal technical colour consultant at PPG. Having worked with colour for more than 12 years, Donna has a deep understanding of how colour interacts with products and finishes, and how this can be used to enhance projects.

Alex Price CTA, ForrestBrown
A chartered tax adviser and a director at ForrestBrown, Alex works with a wide range of businesses, big and small. He is an expert at identifying eligible businesses, and communicating the value of R&D tax credits and their ability to create technical (STEM) jobs.

David Cant, Veritas Consulting
David Cant is a Chartered Safety and Health Practitioner extraordinaire. He has a wealth of industry experience and is the MD of Veritas Consulting.
Grenfell remains in the headlines this month, with delays announced to the inquiry meaning it will be October before we get that detailed report on what happened on that terrible night.

I was there again last month. Despite the upbeat mood at the Curve Community Centre launch (fitted out by FIS Members - see our news section for details), it is hard not to see the shadow that the tower still casts over that part of London and indeed, the entire construction sector.

Whilst the inquiry is delayed, the Government has published the next consultation ‘Building A Safer Future, Proposals for the reform of the Building Safety Regulatory System.’ This consultation focusses on how the government will incorporate the 53 recommendations from the Hackitt review, the role of duty-holders, potential gateway points that are ‘hard stop’ before the regulator gives permission for construction to continue. It also looks at whether BIM should be mandated to support the golden thread of information and how enforcement and sanctions can be strengthened. FIS is gathering feedback from members and will feed in a response over the summer.

This consultation references, but does not incorporate, the work of the Competency Steering Group that has also reached something of a crescendo in recent weeks, with initial reports from the 12 working groups all submitted at the end of May.

The next stage is that reports will be combined, compared and published for further comment. FIS has dedicated significant resource to this process and been active through working groups 2 and 12, focusing on competency in installation and manufacturing. It is a testament to the work of our members through our own working groups that the FIS Product Process People Quality Framework and Skills Attitude Knowledge and Experience Competency Framework have been referenced heavily throughout the process. These concepts are helping to set a framework for change and will continue to be refined through our working groups over the coming months. Other priorities emerging through these groups are manual handling, digitisation and the need to scale up and develop the FIS Acoustic Verification Scheme beyond the initial pilot. It is interesting to draw comparisons between our findings and work we are doing through the Construction Products Association on marketing integrity more broadly across the sector.

But whilst there is massive room for improvement, we should not forget that amazing work does go on all the time and I can’t sign off this month’s magazine without mentioning the FIS Awards. This is my first experience of this amazing event and the quality of entries is both humbling and inspiring and cements in my mind that the finishes and interiors sector is very much the heart of construction. From the chaos that is a building site and despite it all, you turn structures into fabulous spaces, homes, hospitals, schools, theatres. You make the mundane magnificent in an increasingly complex market and we at FIS are very proud to work with you in this vital work.
MEDITE CLEAR – MDF designed for use in the most environmentally sensitive and wellbeing-conscious specifications

Let’s do the right thing!

MEDITE CLEAR is an MDF panel produced using specialist zero added formaldehyde resins, ideal for sensitive areas such as museums and buildings aiming for environmental certifications, where the lowest possible VOC emissions are required.

There is an increasing demand from specifiers for clean and clear product information. MEDITE CLEAR is an MDF that is aware of its delicate surroundings. Let’s work together to create a cleaner, clearer future – do the right thing with MEDITE CLEAR.

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Fostering greater collaboration

Build UK has published a recommendation on contract terms which seeks to form a new common ground between clients and the supply chain on contractual practice in the construction sector in a bid to encourage a fairer transfer of risk through the supply chain.

The recommendation, which is non-binding, sets out six terms which should not be used in contract terms if better project outcomes are to be achieved. The terms cover fitness for purpose, unquantifiable risks, ‘specified perils’, breach of contract, uncapped liabilities and performance securities.

Chairman of Build UK Mark Castle said: “We currently see various contractual practices being used in the construction industry that actively inhibit a spirit of collaboration. They create inefficiencies, conflict, and transfer risk in a way that is inequitable at best, and unreasonable at worst.”

www.builduk.org

CITB CEO impressed during site visit

CEO of CITB Sarah Beale recently attended a site visit with Lakeside Ceilings and Partitions and FIS in Birmingham, where she met trainees and apprentices and spoke with chair of the FIS Skills Board Steve Coley.

CITB has set out key outcomes it will aim to deliver in the run-up to 2020, to tackle the sector’s skills issue.

These include reforming its grants scheme, working closely with industry to improve the way it meets its needs, building stronger partnerships, national campaigns, improved accountability and building a better “evidence base”.

Sarah was heartened by what she learned during her meeting with Steve and the team, saying after the visit: “I am so impressed by the way this work is helping meet the training needs in the sector.”

www.citb.co.uk

Industry partners attend SFS guide launch

FIS has officially launched the Technical Report ED017 - Design and Installation of Light Steel External Wall Systems guide with a consortium of industry partners in attendance recently.

CEO of FIS, Iain McIlwee, said: “The development of this guidance is refreshing and we are so grateful to the SCI for its collaborative and open approach and to all the members who contributed to this work. Sectors evolve only through disruption and positive collaboration and this is a great example of the latter.”

Copies of the Steel Framing Systems guide are available to download from the FIS website.

www.thefis.org/membership-hub/publications/sfsguide

i Wall helps create new support hub for Grenfell community

i Wall has co-ordinated a project to create a new hub which will offer learning and vocational support to the community affected by the Grenfell Tower fire by partitioning off a section of the Curve Community Centre. i Wall, which designs, manufactures, supplies and installs demountable and relocatable partitioning systems, acoustic pods and door solutions, voluntarily co-ordinated the project in collaboration with ConnecMe2, a community partner responsible for collaborative learning initiatives.

www.iwall.co.uk

www.thefis.org
Acoustics appeal case highlights need for caution

A landmark appeal case surrounding acoustics and hearing damage caused to a viola player at the Royal Opera House, has highlighted that no employer/organisation is exempt from protecting staff from hearing damage.

Viola player Christopher Goldscheider sued the London opera house last year, claiming damages for acoustic shock, incurred during a rehearsal of Wagner’s Die Walkure, when he was exposed to noise levels exceeding 130 decibels. He now has to wear ear defenders to carry out everyday household tasks. The Royal Opera House appealed the decision, but this was recently overruled by The Court of Appeal.

FIS technical director Joe Cilia said: “The implications of hearing loss and potential for tinnitus are life changing, yet avoidable. Workspaces should be safe, yet we see instances where baristas and staff in coffee shops are asked to work in noisy environments which increases their risk.”

A good acoustic environment can be achieved through good planning, making environments healthier for all the occupants.”


Build UK PQQ aims to reduce inefficiencies

Build UK and the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) have announced the launch of the first phase of a new pre-qualification (PQQ) system designed to reduce inefficiencies that are costing the construction industry up to £1 billion a year.

The multitude of schemes currently in operation sees around 180,000 specialist contractors producing more than two million pieces of paper every year for 5,000 contractors. The new system will ultimately allow for greater consistency and efficiency in how companies become pre-qualified for work at the first stage. The roll-out of this first phase of the new system includes publication of the common assessment standard used to pre-qualify companies and confirmation of the first recognised assessment bodies to certify companies against the standard. The system is being overseen by an interim cross industry body consisting of experts from organisations including public and private sector clients, contractors and trade associations.

Once the new system is up and running, companies will not have to be certified by more than one recognised assessment body. A data sharing arrangement is currently being developed which will allow contractors to obtain PQ information from any one of the recognised assessment bodies. Contractors will be transitioning to the new system over coming months.

Tapper move marks 35th anniversary

Tapper Interiors is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year, and has chosen the landmark year to move to new premises. It had been at its previous premises for 16 years. Financial director Helen Tapper said: “The move will facilitate business expansion and greater efficiency, as well as allowing us to create a dedicated carpentry workshop and paint store, offices for warehouse operatives and a dedicated training facility. We are also very close to junction 11 of M40 so it is better for logistics.”

The company began trading on 1 September 1984.

Capital office construction at an all time high

The construction of new offices in central London is at its highest level in three years, according to Deloitte Real Estate’s latest London Office Crane Survey. The latest biannual survey recorded 37 new schemes breaking ground in the past six months, adding 3.5m sq ft into the development pipeline. The total office space under construction in the capital is 13.2m sq ft, a 12% increase on the previous survey.

Linear appointed to deliver council refurbishment project

Linear Design & Construct (LDC) has been appointed to deliver the refurbishment of several South Ayrshire Council offices across locations in Ayr and Troon, including extensive works within the council headquarters. Secured through hub South West and South Ayrshire Council, the project will include internal and external works, fit out of several South Ayrshire Council offices and the refurbishment of the former Clydesdale Bank building in Ayr.

TLC supported the BuildBack programme to upskill students attending the Specialist Upskilling Programme at South & City College, Birmingham.

Conservation award

Bristol-based Hayles and Howe, which manufactures and installs decorative ornamental plasterwork and scagliola, has been awarded the Blackpool Council Conservation Award, for works in The Empress Ballroom in Blackpool, a grade II listed building with a 3,000 capacity.

Recognition for boosting employment

Lakeside Ceilings and Partitions (LCP) has won an award from design, construction and refurbishment brand BAM at the 2019 BAM Supply Chain Awards for outstanding contribution to local employment. The award is testament to the FIS initiative BuildBack which helps job seekers who are serious about developing a career in drylining. The programme puts them through two weeks’ college training in the skills and competencies required for installing drylining, followed by a two-week work placement on-site with a local employer.

LCP supported the BuildBack programme by providing work experience to drylining students attending the Specialist Upskilling Programme at South & City College, Birmingham.

www.lcp.co.uk
www.builduk.org
www.ceilingandpartitions.com
www.thefis.org/a-guide-to-office-acoustics
www.linearuk.com
www.tapperinteriors.co.uk
www.haylesandhowe.co.uk
When you’re against the clock, and the pressure’s on, you don’t need any hold-ups. What you do need is a supplier you can trust, and service you can count on. Simple.

To find out more about what we’re doing to be completely customer focused, visit: ccfltd.co.uk/completely-customer-focused
This year’s FIS Contractors Awards were presented at a celebratory lunch held at the Dorchester Hotel in London, where more than 500 members and guests gathered to celebrate the sector’s top performers and guest speaker, renowned explorer Ranulph Fiennes, entertained guests with tales of his many and varied travelling experiences.

Judges praised the quality of this year’s entries and paid tribute to the determination of all FIS members to overcome many industry challenges levelled at them over the past year.

Judges Tony Pieri and Clive Perry said in a joint statement: ‘As ever, the quality of all the entries has been of the highest quality, with decimal points ultimately separating an FIS contractor receiving or not receiving an award. It really is as close as that.

“As judges, we take our responsibilities very seriously as we fully understand the hard work and endeavour all of you have applied to the project you have entered into the awards process. We recognise the pride you feel in your work. That is why you entered your project in the first place.

For that reason, winner or not, we would like to congratulate you all on such unbelievable work, which is evident in some shape or form in all the entries we viewed.

“The past 12 months again have been increasingly challenging and uncertain for us all. However, FIS contractor members, many of whom have not submitted award entries, continue to produce excellent work against the increasing pressure of tight budgets and challenging time constraints. That in itself characterises the spirit of FIS members, who consistently demonstrate their resolve to do a good job on time and within budget.”

They thanked those who gave them their time and hospitality during the visits they had made.

Award categories
The FIS Contractors Awards ceremony pays tribute to design and craftsmanship. The architect or interior designer of a gold-winning project also receives an award. This year’s awards included the following categories:

• Project of the year (selected by FIS judges from all category winners)
• Interior fit out (up to £1m and over £1m)
• Drywall construction – commercial
• Drywall construction – residential
• Fibrous and GRG (new build)
• Heritage plastering
• Specialist joinery
• Operable walls
• Partitioning
• Plastering
• Steel framed systems

This year’s event was sponsored by Ecophon, Forza Doors, SPIT, Lindner Interiors, Optima, Protektor UK and QIC Trims. Category sponsors were as follows: Project of the Year - Minster; Interior Fit Out: over £1m - SIG; Interior Fit Out: under £1m - SIG; Drywall Construction (commercial) - CCF; Drywall Construction (residential) - British Gypsum; Fibrous and GRG (new build) - BuildBack; Heritage Plastering - BuildME; Specialist Joinery - FIS Acoustic Verification Scheme; Operable Walls - SpecFinish; Partitioning - Komfort Partitioning; Plastering - Nevill Long; Steel Framed Systems - voestalpine Metsec; Suspended Ceilings - SAS International.
Awards

Project of the Year

TGM Contractors
Intu, Watford
Architect: 3DReid
www.tgmcontractors.co.uk

Drywall Construction - residential

GOLD ▲
TGM Contractors
Clarges Development, London
Architect: Squire & Partners
www.tgmcontractors.co.uk

SILVER ▲
RPN
The Loftings, Maidenhead
Architect: Vista
Architecture
www.rpnltd.co.uk

Interior Fit Out: over £1m

GOLD ▼
Interior Motives International
China Works, London
Architect: Frost Architects
www.motives.co.uk

SILVER ▲
Lindner Interiors
TVC A (Television Centre Plot A), London
Architect: Allford Hall Monaghan Morris
www.lindner-group.com

Interior Fit Out: under £1m

GOLD ▼
Scotwood Interiors
Trip.com, Edinburgh
Architect: HK Surveying and Design
www.scotwood.com

SILVER ▲
Carlton Contracts
The Flower Bowl Entertainment Centre, Preston
Architects: Nigel Phillips Designs, Ashworth Walker Architects and Bignell Shacklady Ewing
www.carlton-contracts.co.uk
Fibrous and GRG – new build

**GOLD**▼
Erriag Contracts
Adare Manor, Ireland
Architect: ReardonSmith Architects
www.errigalcontracts.co.uk

**SILVER**▼
Artisan Plastercraft
Hotel Russell, London
Architect: EPR Architects
www.artisanplastercraft.com

Specialist Joinery

**GOLD**
Air 3
Aldgate Pavilion, London
Architect: Make Architects
www.air3.build

Heritage Plastering

**GOLD**▼
Artisan Plastercraft
Royal Academy of Arts, London
Architect: Julian Harrap Architects and David Chipperfield Architects
www.artisanplastercraft.com

**SILVER**▼
Hayles & Howe
Blackpool Winter Gardens, Blackpool
www.haylesandhowe.co.uk

Drywall Construction – commercial

**GOLD**▼
TGM Contractors
Intu, Watford
Architect: 3DReid
www.tgmcontractors.co.uk

**SILVER**▼
PDL (Plastering & Drylining)
Wellington College – New Performing Arts Centre, Berkshire
Architect: Bush Consultancy
www.pdlltd.co.uk

www.thefis.org 13
Operable Walls

GOLD ►
Style Moveable Partition Specialists
Vedanta Resources, London
Architect: DaeWha Kang
Design
www.style-partitions.co.uk

SILVER
Ezyglide
National Farmers Union, London
Architect: Redwood
www.ezyglide.co.uk

Steel Framed Systems

GOLD ►
Veitchi Interiors
The Engine Yard, Edinburgh
Architect: Cooper Cromar
www.veitchi.com

SILVER
Atkin Trade Specialists
Goldsmith Avenue, Portsmouth
Architect: HGP Architects
www.atkingroup.co.uk

Partitioning

GOLD ▼
Moda Interiors
HSBC, Birmingham
Architects: tp Bennett
www.moda.uk.com

SILVER ►
Optima Contracting
Condé Nast International, London
Architect: MCM
www.optimasystems.com

Suspended Ceilings

GOLD ►
Integra Contracts
160 Aldersgate Street
Architect: tp Bennett
www.integracontracts.co.uk

SILVER ►
AT Jones & Son
Dreadnought Building, London
www.atjones.net

Plastering

GOLD
Taylor Hart
Stanford Hall, Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre, Lutterworth
Architect: Purcell
www.taylorhart.co.uk
Ceilings that work for you.

**Ultima+ Finesse.**
From open plan areas to private offices, and conference rooms to show stopping reception lobbies, our ceiling solutions offer advanced acoustical control and the highest levels of light reflectance for total comfort.

[armstrongceilings.co.uk](http://armstrongceilings.co.uk)
A shortage of plasterboard and a process of allocation is creating a challenging environment in the finishes and interiors sector, with some contractors reportedly having to turn down work or even delay jobs until as late as October because they haven’t been able to get hold of enough material. The issue is impacting on all of parts of the supply chain.

What is allocation?
A market tends to move into a period of allocation when demand is greater than supply. It is effectively a mechanism to try and manage resources and distribute available product in the fairest possible way. Allocation of plasterboard is not unprecedented, however, it has been a term more associated with bricks in recent years.

The process starts with the manufacturers using their systems to match predicted supply against availability of material. Where supply becomes tight, each manufacturer sets a criterion for fulfillment of orders and communicates this to the supply chain (the allocation). The criterion will depend on the individual manufacturer’s priorities but is typically dependent of factors such as the size of order, customer size/historic ordering pattern and loyalty (e.g. your allocation may be set at X% of your orders from the previous year). This makes it particularly challenging for businesses that are growing quickly.

Where a company is buying through a distributor, the distributor will apply a similar process to their respective customers.

Why are we currently facing allocation?
With eight plasterboard plants in the UK and a shared capacity of 405Mm²/yr, the UK is the world’s fifth largest plasterboard industry (and currently the EU’s largest) by installed capacity. So, it would, on the face of it, seem strange that plasterboard is in shortage, but as with most things, if we dig beneath the surface, it all gets a bit more complicated.

The cause for the shortage is difficult to pinpoint, but it appears a number of factors are creating something of a storm. This kind of shortage is reminiscent of the situation experienced in 2003, when materials lead-in times for specialist plasterboard stretched to weeks. At that time, board producers British Gypsum and Knauf accredited the shortage on exceptional demand which had exceeded forecasts. Once again it appears the relative buoyancy in the market is a key contributor.

Growth in the housing sector is driving demand and, whilst some regions of the UK are faring better than others, the overall situation and profile of housing being developed is stretching the market for plasterboard. At the same time, whilst we’ve seen reports that commercial and retail activity have been subjected to delayed investment in the past two years, the ramifications of this are yet to cascade through to the finishing and interiors sector, refurb has remained resilient (fueled by high tenancy) and hence there remains a relatively strong pipeline of work at least in the short-term.

SpecFinish looks at what is driving allocation, what it means to the supply chain and what can be done to manage a difficult situation.
Compounding this relatively high demand, despite strong domestic manufacture, the market is not impervious to global demand and trade issues. Whilst being relatively self-sustaining, the structure and scale of demand means that the UK market has relied increasingly on imports of both raw material and plasterboard itself to top-up and meet specialist demand. This means that whilst the market is perhaps more protected from Brexit than other material sectors, uncertainty and wider global issues are still having an impact.

From the supply side, stronger demand on the continent is potentially drawing imports away from the UK in 2019. At the same time, unrest over Brexit and some resulting logistical issues that have been reported have almost certainly compounded the issue. This has been mirrored by rumors of low-level stockpiling (possibly a bit of no-deal Brexit/allocation concern panic buying) that have also absorbed some capacity.

Finally, the UK is faced with some fundamental changes necessitated by the switch from synthetic to natural gypsum. FGD gypsum is an alternative to natural gypsum that comes from the flue gas desulphurisation plant (FGD) of the power station industry. As the UK leans to more renewable sources of energy, the availability of FGD gypsum is diminishing. This will have some impact on capacity as FGD gypsum has a higher purity (gypsum content of 96%) than most natural gypsum (80%) and usage thus helps to increase production capacity.

When can we expect an end to allocations?

Whilst some of the underlying issues may abate over the coming months, demand looks set to remain relatively strong in the short term and with uncertainty continuing over the UK’s membership of the EU and Customs Union and the ongoing shift to a lower carbon grid, it seems unlikely that the situation will ease significantly in the near future.

How to manage allocations

One leading contractor told us: “There is a shortage and so better planning is critical. Right now we are looking at an absolute minimum of four weeks’ notice which seems to work for most board types. Inevitably, the more specialist boards may be on a longer lead time and this should be checked with the suppliers before committing to fast track programs.”

From a contractor’s perspective the most important thing is to plan ahead and ensure that you manage the contractual elements of allocation so as not to leave yourself exposed to delay clauses and penalties arising from an inability to secure plasterboard on time for a particular job. It is absolutely critical to maintain a close dialogue with your suppliers to ensure that the right material is available for the right job before you are committing to potentially expensive deadlines. Keep your clients informed of the situation, pay attention to the wording in any contracts that you sign, and ensure than any potential hurdles are addressed as early as possible.

Don’t panic. Allocation is about planning, not stockpiling. Storing material can be high risk, not just because of the mechanics of storing and handling in the right conditions, but there are potentially significant implications on your working capital and any insurances that you might hold.

Be careful about breaking specification. The market is without doubt becoming more focused on systems and assemblies that can be proven in terms of critical performance (e.g. fire) based on clear test evidence - changing any element of a specification or worse mixing materials may create risks to sign off and potentially performance. When reviewing contractual obligations including specifications and requirements for performance and workmanship, or adapting a design or specification, it is essential that companies do so in full consultation with suppliers and with the written approval of the designers and system owner to ensure they are not inadvertently accepting responsibility or design liability either through their actions or by way of contractual obligation.

So where is the silver lining?

Notwithstanding the challenges that allocation creates, there may be a silver-lining. Is this an opportunity to farm new habits? At times perhaps we have been guilty of being too flexible and responsive as a supply chain, exacerbating the last-minute culture that has crept in to construction, could allocation be a catalyst for positive change, an opportunity to take stock and look again at how we work? In this climate, establishing long term relationships with reliable suppliers has never been more important and a potential positive could be to use allocation as an opportunity to establish better and more robust longer-term relationships between specialist contractors and their clients, relationships based on trust and delivering quality against realistic and transparent commitments.

As part of the wider quality and risk management agenda that is gripping construction, more forward planning and sequencing of work is emerging as a critical factor in both improving quality and productivity and reducing waste. More planning and earlier engagement of and with specialist suppliers would undoubtedly help here. It will also help us to overcome problems related to material selection and unachievable designs, early and better engagement with specialist contractors is critical to educating and better supporting the design community in understanding the practicalities and avoiding common problems.

Aside from the benefits to quality that better planning of specification brings, with inherent shortages in the market we simply cannot afford to waste material. To make a step change in material yield, site planning is key.

Better storage, moving material around site unhindered is critical and better scheduling will help to avoiding problems related to rushed work and damage due to damped or simply moving boards around complex and cluttered sites. Better planned and laid out sites would also have a positive benefit on some of the health and safety implications that surround moving boards around badly planned construction sites.

Could this relative scarcity really be the catalyst for positive change for the drylining sector?»
Technical

‘Implementing short-term measures to increase output’

Matt Pullen, MD of British Gypsum, said in a statement that there had been increased demand for Thistle plaster and Gyproc plasterboard for drylining since the beginning of the year and, when compared to the first five months of 2018, BG dispatched an additional 2,800 trailer loads of Gyproc plasterboard and Thistle plaster this year.

“We are taking all opportunities to supply as much product as possible as quickly as we can, but whilst there remains an imbalance between demand and supply for Thistle plaster and Gyproc plasterboard, we will continue to support our customers with new ways of working,” he states, adding that BG is working closely with its customers to understand and fulfill its agreed demand requirements for BG products.

BG has implemented “all possible short-term measures” to increase output and is actively importing where possible from sister Saint-Gobain companies.

“To ensure a fair distribution of supply to all of our customers, we have implemented a process of allocation for plasterboard based upon historical ordering patterns,” Matt states. “Before implementing plasterboard allocation, increased lead time for Gyproc plasterboards resulted in a higher demand for composite loads containing Thistle plaster. Greater use of Gyproc plasterboard has also generated more demand for a Thistle plaster system finish to achieve our unique SpecSure® warranty. This has resulted in reduced stock for Thistle plasters.”

“As our stock levels have reduced, we have not been able to uphold our next day delivery service to our merchant and distribution customers – our lead time for Thistle Plaster is extended. To avoid disappointing installer customers, naturally our merchants and distribution customers are placing orders for future delivery, based on our temporary extended lead time, to ensure they have stock of Thistle plaster available, which currently is further extending lead-times. Our measures to increase output will reduce these lead-times in the future, details and timings will be released as soon as we can confirm.”

He summed up the situation by saying: “We are doing everything we can to put as much Thistle plaster and Gyproc plasterboard as possible into the market without compromising quality.”

Providing options and minimizing disruption is key

Distributor Nevill Long, a division of the Encon Group, believes an open approach and good customer understanding are key to handling the plasterboard shortage. A company statement said:

“At Nevill Long we have a number of processes in place to ensure that the supply to our customers is managed effectively and robustly. This is being conducted with a realistic and open approach, taking into consideration the challenges that our customers are facing and trying to ensure their projects are not delayed. We also want to make sure that customers can plan their projects with confidence on delivery of materials on time and in full, as well as providing cost certainty during this time. We recommend contractors speak with their local sales teams at Nevill Long for up to date availability as the situation is continually changing, and plan as much lead time as possible to fulfil their projects.”

“Adding to this pain is the fact that glass mineral wool insulation products are also on allocation with major manufacturers. Although the availability is relaxing a little, it has forced contractors and installers alike to consider alternative solutions in their projects. At Nevill Long we work with various manufacturers to provide options.”

“This availability has been proving a challenge since November 2018 and continues throughout 2019 and only the manufacturers themselves will be able to advise on the future and if there is an end in sight. We are working closely with our key manufacturers to ensure we minimise disruption as much as possible with customers and their projects.”

Value of Overseas Trade in Plasterboard (£’000)

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<tr>
<td>Exports</td>
<td>4,499</td>
<td>5,029</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BEIS Building materials and components statistics
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**FIS SKILLS CLINICS INCREASE RETURN ON CITB LEVY**

Members benefit from one-to-one consultancies and new skills pledge.

The CITB launched its Construction Training Directory as the new vehicle for all grant claims in April 2018 with the aim to automate the whole process, making it easier to access and process. Unfortunately, the launch of the online tool alongside the development of new standards proved a real challenge for many businesses working in finishes and interiors. With the new system difficult to navigate, companies have been reporting reduced claims or even giving up on claiming altogether. With the deadline for submission being the end of June 2019 for all 2018 claims, FIS decided to step in. During May and June FIS ran a series of dedicated skills clinics across the UK, aimed at helping members to understand the system and the new criteria being applied to maximise their CITB grant claims.

Amanda Scott, FIS engagement manager - skills said: “FIS is passionate about skills and training and when its membership provides feedback on areas where help is needed, we do all we can to step up. This process has been about helping people to draw on the support that they are entitled to, helping to provide the funding necessary to support ongoing training and upskilling of their workforce. The skills clinics provided a proactive way of helping members to maximise their 2018/2019 CITB training grant claims and to start planning for 2019/2020.”

The skills clinics provided one-to-one consultancies at set locations around the UK and involved going through training plans and paperwork, matching these with available funding and ensuring participating businesses retrospectively got back money they had invested in training employees. The FIS Team also used it as an opportunity to review forward plans to ensure those for 2019/2020 also obtained the support they are entitled to draw on.

“We have had people attending the clinics at all stages of claims, some who hadn’t claimed before and others increasing claims by as much as 50%. This work has helped to generate, literally, tens of thousands of pounds for our members to support the training that they are doing,” said Amanda.

The clinics highlighted the following areas where members needed assistance. The new CITB Construction Training Directory is hard to navigate, particularly when identifying suitable courses and matching to existing training; the majority did not know they could go back to April 2018 to claim; members have not been claiming because of the complexity of the process; members who had claimed had not identified all the training eligible for grants; the main challenge was finding the time to focus and understand the changes; apprentice provision and complexity was a recurring theme.

Amanda said: “There are still some findings that we need to address as a group and with the team at CITB. However, the feedback at the end of each session has been positive and the assistance the FIS skills team provided through the clinic was received very well. For us, it was a great way to engage with members on a deeper level and really understand their challenges, plans and aspirations.”

Those who attended the clinics said it had highlighted opportunities for them.

Anthony Underwood, commercial director of Grimes Finishings, was grateful to FIS for its CITB grant claims guidance. He said: “It highlighted a number of areas where Grimes Finishings can claim additional grant funding to further aid our training and development plan.”

Roseville Contracts is currently undergoing an up-skilling exercise “to ensure that all skills gaps are plugged.” Its health and safety manager, Billy Harris AISH AIIRSM, said: “I was able to discuss our training matrix and what we had already put in place, but was amazed by the information that I was not aware of, even down to our site-delivered short duration courses. The FIS clinic has definitely enhanced our position and will allow us to meet with our training aspirations.”

**The new FIS Sector Skills Pledge**

Members have been encouraged to support the FIS Sector Skills Pledge, a commitment an employer makes to become a FIS Skills Champion and to embrace programmes that will...
help the whole sector to create a sustainable, competent and skilled workforce.

Amanda said: “The Sector Skills Pledge was designed to secure future sector sustainability and address the skills shortages in key trades. We need to work together as a sector. This will ensure a steady supply of new entrants into the sector who will be trained and skilled tradespeople, with the right qualifications for their trade, to deliver the projects needed.

“Businesses can deliver lasting change by providing work experience, taking on apprentices and setting individuals up with skills and knowledge for long-term careers. FIS wants to inspire young people to choose careers in construction as a first-choice option, not the last.”

She added: “By becoming an FIS Sector Skills Champion, this demonstrates their commitment to supporting new entrants in the sector and ensuring future sector sustainability. This pledge highlights which businesses and employers are going the extra mile.”

To become a Skills Champion, an employer organisation needs to commit and sign up to at least one of the programmes listed in the Sector Skills Pledge. To find out more and to sign, visit our website at www.thefis.org/fis-sector-skills-pledge

Counter-attack launched in war for talent

The construction sector is losing the war for talent within the next generation, with only 7% of 16-18-year-olds now considering a career in the sector and more collaboration is needed within the industry to address this, according to a new report from independent construction and property consultancy, Stace.

The Stace Next Gen Index surveyed 16–18-year-olds across the UK to understand their perception of the construction and built environment sector. It also revealed that the attractiveness of a career in construction has decreased to 6% for females and only 4% for BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) respondents.

Gareth Sinnamon, partner at Stace LLP, states in the report: “The skills shortage is a challenge that is affecting the whole construction and built environment industry. There are several industry bodies reporting that significant numbers of recruits are required, while at the same time, there are high levels of people exiting the industry owing to retirement or other factors. There is, therefore, a lot of reliance placed on the next generation filling this ever-increasing gap.”

He called on those throughout the industry to collectively come together to look at ways to inspire the next generation and showcase the industry better.

Construction Youth Trust is working alongside Stace on the Next Gen campaign to engage and inspire the next generation through better work experience opportunities.

Chief executive Carol Lynch said many young people were not aware of the range of careers offered within the construction yet our industry is “crying out” for a new generation of built environment professionals, with both practical and digital skills, to work in roles such as project managers, surveyors, carpenters and engineers.

The Stace Next Gen Programme will provide paid work experience opportunities for year 12 students. Research from CITB shows that the industry needs to recruit 31,600 people every year to 2022, while the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) states that 157,000 new recruits are needed by 2021.

To become a Skills Champion, an employer organisation needs to commit and sign up to at least one of the programmes listed in the Sector Skills Pledge. To find out more and to sign, visit our website at www.thefis.org/fis-sector-skills-pledge

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**USE COLOUR CONSTRUCTIVELY TO OPTIMISE WORKPLACES**

Donna Taylor, colour consultant at PPG, offers her advice on colour selection in commercial environments.

The average person spends 34 hours and 26 minutes working per week. That’s 1,791 hours a year and 84,171 hours in the course of their lifetime. With such a significant proportion of our lives being spent at work, it’s critical that we consider the impact of office design on employees’ wellbeing, job satisfaction and, ultimately, productivity.

In particular, colour can be a hugely influential factor when it comes to the way people perceive and interact with a space. Colour has an innate ability to influence our mood and performance, making it a crucial component of any design project.

However, this is amplified in workspaces, where productivity and wellbeing are of increasing importance, so careful attention must be paid to the colour palettes chosen. With a whole spectrum to choose from, though, and given the fact that everyone reacts to colour subjectively, there are of course no guaranteed consequences to choosing a particular colour. Nonetheless, some colours can broadly be attributed to certain feelings and actions, and an individual brand’s values must underpin every decision a designer makes.

**A rainbow of emotions**

In the past, we’ve previously seen white as the ‘default’ colour predominately used in workspaces. This is attributable, in part, to the belief that it can be useful for opening up small workspaces and creating a blank canvas for employees. Keeping a space ‘clean’ and clutter-free is indeed crucial, but that does not need to mean ‘clinical’.

A study into the effects of colour in offices on workers’ mood and productivity actually found that not only is white harsh on the eyes, but pure white office spaces tend to be unproductive work environments where employees will consistently perform worse. So, with that in mind, how can we introduce colour creatively to help encourage people to engage with their workspace?

Bold colours, such as red and orange, can help to inspire energetic behavior when used appropriately. For example, in fast-paced environments, injecting a bright splash of colour from this palette could help to embody a brand’s energy and stimulate employees. It is important to consider where and how these shades are used. Strong shades when over-used, or used in the wrong place, can be overpowering and there’s some research that suggests they can also be disruptive.

Yellow is a softer alternative that often makes a more practical colour choice. Using a warming shade that’s less intrusive can be inspirational, helping to drive creativity without being too distracting.

If you are looking to create different zones within a space, cooler shades, such as green, can be ideal choices to encourage contemplative work and periods of concentration owing to their connection to the outdoor world.

It is important to vary the strength of shades depending on the functionality of a space. If you are designing a more open plan space that has mixed working environments for example, neutral colour palettes can often be a good choice in order to achieve a harmonious balance.
But don’t go too bland. A neutral scheme can benefit from pops of colour conveyed by soft furnishings and accessories.

**Breaking the rules**
There are special considerations to be made in sectors of a more sensitive nature, such as healthcare. In these environments, the effect of colour can be more acute and can even help or hinder the recovery of patients.

As designers will testify, it’s all about considering the patient’s situation first and foremost. Dementia patients are particularly sensitive to colour as they can often suffer from visual deterioration and have difficulty distinguishing between colours. In this instance, the shade of colour is not the most important factor. Instead, colour should be used to make patients feel as comfortable and calm as possible through a combination of complimentary and contrasting colours, as well as being used as a tool for wayfinding in the correct locations.

**Working with colour**
There are thousands of shades available within a colour group, so it’s not as simple as creating hard and fast rules around how they are used. However, one thing we know for certain is that colour is a powerful tool and, when used correctly, it can have a dramatic impact on our wellbeing and productivity, and even the commerciality of a space.

**FIND OUT MORE**
If you would like some colour inspiration, visit [www.Johnstonestrade.com/VOCFandeck](http://www.Johnstonestrade.com/VOCFandeck) to claim your free Voice of Colour fan deck which showcases more than 2,000 colours (whilst stocks last).
We recently helped a London-based £12m turnover commercial fit-out company to access growth-fuel for their business. The company had worked with an architect to refurbish a period building in central London.

The fit-out included redeveloping the basement structure to provide more space internally. To do this, it had to replace a steel beam, but the degradation of the building and noise restrictions disruption meant the usual cold-cutting process used to replace a steel beam wasn't possible. Instead, the company built a temporary structure around the building to act as a rig, with a hoist attached, to remove the steel beam.

This project, amongst others earned the company an R&D tax credit worth £180,000.

What are R&D tax incentives?

R&D tax credits are a valuable government incentive designed to reward UK companies for investing in innovation. Established in 2000, successive governments of all stripes have backed the incentive to deliver positive economic benefits. And with good reason. HMRC estimates that for every £1 of tax foregone, up to £2.35 in additional expenditure is stimulated.

For UK businesses, R&D tax credits are a valuable source of risk-free funding. You can spend them however you choose. Many businesses use the incentive strategically to grow their business by further accelerating their R&D or to enhance their capabilities with the hire for investing in new STEM talent. For an SME, the average claim value is currently £53,876, and for some, it’s worth much more.

To benefit from this valuable incentive, your business must be a limited company in the UK subject to corporation tax, have carried out qualifying R&D projects, and have spent money on these projects.

How to identify if your work counts as R&D

Understanding whether you’ve carried out qualifying R&D can be the biggest hurdle for businesses of all different types. That’s because the definition set out by the government of what constitutes R&D is purposely broad, so that it applies to business from all different sectors, and sizes.

Typically, we find R&D in the commercial fit-out sector when businesses are investing in new or improved fit-out products, processes or systems. Often businesses face technical challenges and risk losing money when trying to deliver ceilings, drylining, operable walls, partitions, plastering, heritage plastering and raised-access flooring in a way that’s faster, safer, greener or cheaper.

It might be a bespoke interior finish for: fire retardance, improved acoustics, better air quality, warmer or cooler environments, unique aesthetics, overcoming challenges encountered in listed or historical buildings, or high-end commercial premises, high-net-worth private clients. Anywhere where a non-standard approach is required.

Eight ways you might be carrying out R&D

Are you:

• Designing a glass partitioning system that meets certain acoustic requirements?
• Developing installation methods to accommodate the refurbishment of a listed building?
• Installing new partitioning systems that are sympathetic to the existing infrastructure?
• Integrating a new air-conditioning system with a legacy system during a workspace fit-out?
• Value engineering a refurbishment under tight cost constraints?
• Adapting existing processes to adhere to changing building regulations?
• Developing new installation processes to re-fit a workspace under space constraints?
• Creating new materials to be installed in a temperature-controlled environment?

Alex Price CTA, R&D tax credits expert

Alex is a director with ForrestBrown, the largest specialist R&D tax credit consultancy in the UK. A chartered tax adviser and a director at ForrestBrown, Alex works with a wide range of businesses, big and small. He has more than 20 years’ experience built up at Deloitte, PwC and ForrestBrown. Alex is an expert at identifying eligible businesses, and communicating the value of R&D tax credits and their ability to create technical (STEM) jobs. He builds relationships with people who are interested in seeing how R&D tax credits can be used whether that is for themselves or businesses that they advise or represent. He works with many accountants and trade associations that want to support clients and members.

www.forrestbrown.co.uk/why-choose-us/sectors/construction a.price@forrestbrown.co.uk

Alex Price describes how to follow in the footsteps of a London fit-out business which hit a research and development tax credit jackpot
DCL fends off 200 to clinch H&S title

Drywall Contracts (DCL) of Northampton has beaten more than 200 contenders to clinch the Morgan Sindall regional health and safety award 2018 for a Vita Student project which involved drylining, partitions, plastering, ceilings, some small areas of SFS, external insulation and brick-tie channels for a 360-bed luxury student accommodation. The project at Pershore Road, Birmingham, lasted 33 weeks and Drywall Contracts received its award at the main contractor’s supply chain event for its attitude and innovation towards health and safety.

“It was a bit of a surprise to win this on our first contract for Morgan Sindall,” said managing director Jon Jacznik. “Securing this award is a massive achievement for DCL and I’m immensely proud of everyone involved. Health and safety is led from the management, however having the whole team buy into the company ethos is very pleasing to see”

www.drywallcontracts.co.uk

Procurement role

Stortford Interiors, which specialises in the supply and installation of wall, ceiling and total interior solutions across the UK, has appointed Amy Hellewell as its new procurement manager.

www.stortford-interiors.com

New quality manager

Marcus Pilling, former technical manager at Saint-Gobain Ecophon UK and Ireland, has taken up a new position as quality manager at AJ Group in Fareham, Hampshire.

Marcus spent four years at Saint-Gobain and previously worked as regional sales manager for Minster Insulation and regional sales director for British Gypsum.

Neil takes up MD’s role

Neil Dallamore has joined Reddiplex Group as group managing director. With extensive operations and sales experience in executive roles in the UK and internationally, Neil has worked in a wide variety of industries and sectors, including many years as a managing director in the successful international development, manufacture and sale of highly engineered sealing products using polymer technology. Neil succeeds Owen Boylan who served 15 years as group managing director. Owen is remaining on the board as a non-executive director supporting Neil’s transition into the role.

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The workplace has undoubtedly undergone a revolution in the past decade, with technology, open-plan offices, clever lighting and paneling, and adaptable office furniture all playing their part.

This has never been more apparent than at this year’s Clerkenwell Design Week (CDW), which celebrated its 10th edition this year. The event was marked by a new series of collaborations and many FIS members flocked to the event to visit clients and suppliers, exhibit, or simply absorb the atmosphere and gain inspiration from what was on offer.

The ways in which good design can shape the workplace of the future were discussed in depth by designers Sebastian Wrong and Erwan Bouroullec as part of the Conversations at Clerkenwell offering. New designs by Erwan featured in an interactive workspace at Fora, where visitors were able to explore the possibilities of its new designs by trying them out with hot-desking and wi-fi. Office nomads, co-working, start-up culture, and an increased use of freelancers has transformed office culture over the past decade, and design has been key to transforming hierarchical office systems into spaces that are more flexible and increasingly open, it was revealed during their talk, while both architects and designers have a challenge on their hands to ensure workplace creation is both functional and environmentally pleasing.

FIS technical director Joe Cilia, who presented ‘A Guide to Office Acoustics’ at the Knauf Showroom on the second day of the show, said CDW presented an annual snapshot of how the sector is reacting to changes in commercial interiors.

“It was clear that the activity-based workspace is established as the format for the collaborative communicative, and interactive spaces required for the thinking places that have replaced the outdated clerical offices,” he said. “This was clearly exemplified by the number of free-standing pods and sound absorbing products on show, but the traditional partition manufacturers were also showing how stunning meeting rooms could be created using banded elevations and even sloping frameless glass.”

Every year, Paramount’s sales and workplace design teams make the annual trip to CDW and its design undergraduate Amy blogged after the event that the differing methods of presentation throughout the showrooms helped her understand how suppliers see the workplace changing. She was particularly inspired by Frovi, which created a combination of collaborative spaces with different themes, and Spacestor’s use of a 3D printer to create miniature models of products and combine them in a space plan that suited a typical working office.

Many other emerging designers, architects, thought leaders and creative institutes shared their insights on issues impacting on office design during CDW talks and demonstrations. OnOffice hosted a panel session of design-innovators making a difference to wellness in the workplace, artist Liz West spoke about psychology of colour and WOD (Women in Office Design) led a panel discussion.

FIS members who attended this year’s CDW were impressed by what it had to offer. Forza Doors welcomed clients new and old to an exhibition at The Vault, which featured lighting, storage wall, office furniture, carpets, doors and partitions suppliers. Sales director Alan Brown said: “We had approximately 1,100 individuals through our showroom which was about the same as last year, but there was a feeling that the quality of people this year was better. Forza launched our new range of security doors PAS 24 certified throughout the event and, pleasingly, we have had a positive response to this development.”

The annual Forza drinks night during CDW attended by Iain Mcilwee and Nigel Higgins, catered for more than 80 guests, and many non-FIS members who attended voiced a firm commitment to join. Samantha Dawe, marketing manager – EMEA, of Shaw Contract, said: “The challenge is, as our showroom is a permanent fixture in Clerkenwell, to get people’s attention when there is so much else on! We did this successfully this year, engaging with an upcoming artist for a ‘showroom takeover’ during the three days, and also drawing on some exciting digital interactive activities to appeal to festival-goers. We saw a range of people from around the UK and further afield, and I think that is why CDW has become an event that now gets international attention. It appeals to the broad design audience and the general public, so there is a real cross-section of people coming to the event, which has its advantages and disadvantages, but overall this year, in terms of the types of people we would like to see through the door, I would say it was one of the best years yet for us in terms of engaging with visitors.”

Not all showrooms in Clerkenwell took part in the organised event but benefited by association. FIS member Tony Wills, a partner with Wills Watson Associates and director of Buttonfix Ltd, both of whom are based at Britton Street, Farringdon, in the heart of the CDW area, said: “It was a good event this year, and I’m glad it went so well. It was interesting to see some of the displays and we had a lot of people drop in on us while the show was on, even though we weren’t an official exhibitor.”

‘Collaborating spaces required for the thinking places have replaced the outdated clerical offices.’
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Go on, put your back into it” is a fairly common phrase, usually uttered as a form of encouragement when someone is struggling to lift a heavy object such as plasterboards.

But when you think about it, it’s an extraordinary thing to say, given that putting your back into it is precisely the wrong thing to do. It’s the kind of encouragement that could lead to some significant injuries, not least the commonly referred-to ‘slipped disc’.

Manual handling is beyond lifting

There is a clear definition of manual handling, which refers to lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling and carrying loads. Although they may vary throughout the fit-out sector, unless manual handling activities within the workforce are managed correctly, they can cause injuries by putting a strain on the limbs, tendons, heart and, most commonly, the muscles and back.

Stay safe with manual handling

The apparently simple act of lifting and carrying something can actually lead to serious harm – if you’re not doing it the right way. Many workers will encounter manual handling activities in the workplace whether it’s lifting a box of tiles or transporting materials to the working area, so that puts a lot of people at risk of a manual handling injury.

Three steps to safety

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (MHOR) 1992 outline a recommended three-step approach for companies, which is to:

• Avoid manual handling by implementing automated processes where possible.
• Assess the risk of injury where it cannot be avoided and
• Reduce the risk as far as possible.

Successfully implementing the right control measures and equipment within the workplace can help to significantly reduce the risk of injury. Mechanised or automated handling equipment can also speed up operations and boost overall productivity. Coupled with an improvement in physical wellbeing, this can also help increase staff morale. However, if employers are investing in equipment, sufficient training must be delivered to ensure safety.

Why training matters

Training is a valuable preventative measure for ensuring that employees can perform daily tasks correctly and safely and is an effective way for companies to enforce safety regulations and practices. Employers have a legal obligation to provide the necessary staff training for any job, and this extends to educating employees in manual handling.

Obviously, there are no one-size fits all approach to tackling issues around manual handling and the right solution will differ between businesses and construction sites.

However, I would recommend assessing and addressing the most serious risks as a priority.

Help is at hand for the fit-out sector

To help contractors get to grips with the safe handling of plasterboard, industry guidance has been produced by the Gypsum Products Development Association (GPDA), this guide is intended to assist with planning all stages of the installation process in which plasterboard will be distributed and handled, and to use the established ‘hierarchy of controls’ in the correct order.

This process will involve considering the specific plasterboard product(s) used, the site layout and management, and the equipment used to move them if any. The selection of solutions, methods and equipment can be broken down into particular tasks and stages of construction, as summarized in these four stages below:

1. Taking delivery of material
2. Moving the material from point of delivery to storage location
3. Moving the material from a storage location to the point of use
4. Mechanical and non-mechanical aids for installation from the point of use to wall

Within the guidance, there are the hierarchy of controls too which are to be used to minimise harmful hazards from the most effective, to the least effective; as applied to the handling of plasterboard: Elimination – remove the hazard; Substitution – replace the hazard; Engineering controls – isolate people from the hazard; Administrative controls – change the
CITB introduces updates to test

CITB has announced a major update to the health, safety and environment test, which it introduced in 2001 in response to high levels of significant accidents and incidents in construction.

CITB regularly reviews the test to make sure it meets current health and safety legislation, including any changes to EU regulations (which the UK is still subject to) and is aligned with the latest industry practice. Around half a million people sit the test each year, making it one of the most taken after the driving licence.

This time a much more detailed review has taken place, taking into account feedback from construction workers, employers and other key stakeholders across the industry.

CITB has worked with assessment company Pearson VUE to improve the format of the questions, and to ensure the test remains fair, reliable and valid. This included piloting new questions and formats with 7,500 candidates over the past year.

The test for construction operatives in particular is being substantially updated to better reflect the range of day to day tasks and responsibilities on site. The test instructions have also been made clearer, in response to candidate feedback.

www.citb.co.uk

Fire labelling scheme relaunched to reduce breaches in compartment walls

FIS and the ASFP (Association for Specialist Fire Protection) have relaunched the fire labelling scheme to reduce breaches in compartment walls.

Incorrectly installed service penetrations are one of the greatest risks to the spread of smoke and flames in the event of a fire in buildings. The potential for a compartment wall to fail in a fire where services pass through are increased where work is done during maintenance or upgrading work, and the M&E contractor is not aware that they are breaching a compartment wall.

The fire labelling scheme is a way of highlighting the performance of the wall and directing operatives to advice on how to ensure the performance can be maintained.

Compartment walls are often constructed from drylining and installed by vetted members of FIS who will be aware of the performance requirements of each wall type. These walls are installed between the structural floors often with a suspended ceiling to create a void for the services, and it’s in this void that the labels will be clearly placed to highlight the potential risk when future work takes place.

FIS technical director Joe Cilia said: “Recent fires in buildings have highlighted a lack of proper compartmentation causing the Fire to spread, so this simple scheme has a huge potential to save lives. By working closely with our members, we hope the inexpensive initiative will demonstrate the additional benefits to contractors to use FIS members.”

Niall Rowan COO of the ASFP added: “The QR code takes people directly to a dedicated page on our website where operatives can get instant information and links to third party accredited products and installers to ensure a compliant installation for peace of mind.”

http://asfp.org.uk/fire-performance-labelling-scheme

Further details can be found in this helpful guide of which gives a comprehensive view of planning and lifting activities, including a number of practical in use examples to follow - www.thefis.org/gpda-guide-to-manual-handling-plasterboard

way people work; PPE – protect the worker with personal protective equipment.

Remember when it comes to lifting materials, it’s essential to have the proper technique to lifting an object, depending on its size, weight and how many people are involved or indeed the right equipment for the job.

It is my opinion that it is the proliferation of mechanical aids that has contributed most to the reduction in injuries, and therefore can be the cause of continued reductions.

I say this because in the 15 years or so I spent visiting construction sites, I rarely saw anyone handling loads using the correct lifting technique, despite many people having been trained to do so. But therein lies the story of another problem that affects the construction industry – behaviour.

So, although I started off by suggesting that “put your back into it” is a commonly-heard phrase, I must confess that I haven’t heard it said for a long time, which I hope is more, if somewhat anecdotal, evidence of increased awareness of the problem, even if not everyone does manual handling right yet!
INSPIRING CHANGE

The winners who went the extra mile

Making employees feel valued by creating open and inclusive workplace cultures in which everyone feels appreciated and able to engage, is now widely recognised within the finishes and interiors sector as key to business success, and the recent Inspiring Change Awards and Conference sought to recognise those throughout construction and infrastructure who had championed this cause.

The event, now in its fourth year, was organised by The Civil Engineering Contractors Association (Southern) Ltd, and for the first year CECA was joined by partners from other trade federations. Keynote Speakers were Mark Reynolds, CEO of Mace and chair of Skills Workstream, Construction Leadership Council, and Gillian Unsworth, Head of Gender Pay Gap Reporting, Government Equalities. Representatives from the Unsworth, Head of Gender Pay Gap Reporting, Government Equalities. Representatives from the Peter Jones Foundation, Like to Be, Diversity Hut, Young Woman’s Trust, L&Q Foundation, Anglian Water, Kent Supported Employment Service also took part in panel discussions.

Briony Wickenden, head of training and development at CECA South, said there had been an impressive number of quality entries in this year’s awards, and both judges and delegates found plenty to inspire them.

She said “The quantity, standard and diversity of the submissions has improved year on year since the first awards four years ago. The judges were so impressed that they blew the budget for trophies and we had to have 11 made! One judge, Ian Heptonstall from Action Sustainability, our delivery partner for the cross-industry FIR (Fairness, Inclusion and Respect) programme, has judged all four and he commented on the very high quality this year”

She said there had been many more submissions for Inspiration Awards and quality in that category was particularly high. All those who received an award had introduced initiatives that judges felt benefited their own business and the community, demonstrating how these aligned to company goals, made a sustainable and positive impact on the workforce or community and had delivered positive results.

The winners were as follows:

Inspiring Change – Community: Winner Morgan Sindall Infrastructure: This initiative saw long-term unemployed people return to work in an area of with “deep pockets of poverty”.

Inspiring Change – Education: Alan Griffiths (Contractors) Ltd: The winning entry developed a programme which has interacted with over 2,000 children at primary schools, engaged and inspired over 3000 students through secondary school and ultimately into apprenticeships.

Inspiring Change – Workplace: Balfour Beatty: The winning entry aims to address the under-representation of minority groups and has introduced a multicultural affinity network.

Inspiring Change – SME Award by Action Sustainability CPUK Civils and Remediation: The winning entry aims to create site-ready candidates for employment as plant operatives, targeting ex-offenders from HM Prison Hindley, Wigan.

Project Award for Inspiring Change in the Community: Costain Skanska JV: This initiative supports homeless people into employment through relationships with charities

Project Award for Inspiring Change in the Workplace Category: BMV JV: This project introduced a range of initiatives to help attract, recruit and retain a more diverse workforce.

The FIR Inspiration Award: Anusha Shah: The winner writes blogs, social media posts, chairs panel discussions and holds one to ones with senior industry leaders championing the cause for a fair and inclusive industry.

FIS is running similar initiatives through its Fit-out Future programme. For more information visit www.thefis.org/skills-hub
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