

SPEC FINISH

FIS

The magazine of FIS
representing the finishes
and interiors sector

www.thefis.org

Impressive interiors

A major new Sheffield city office development, a historic Stratford hotel and one of London's largest residential projects are amongst notable new fit-outs recently unveiled



Legislation

Fire safety:
What it means to
be a duty holder

Skills & Training

Workforce management
and how we interrogate
competence

Technical

Workmanship tolerances in
drylining and how to manage
client expectations



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Welcome

SPEC FINISH

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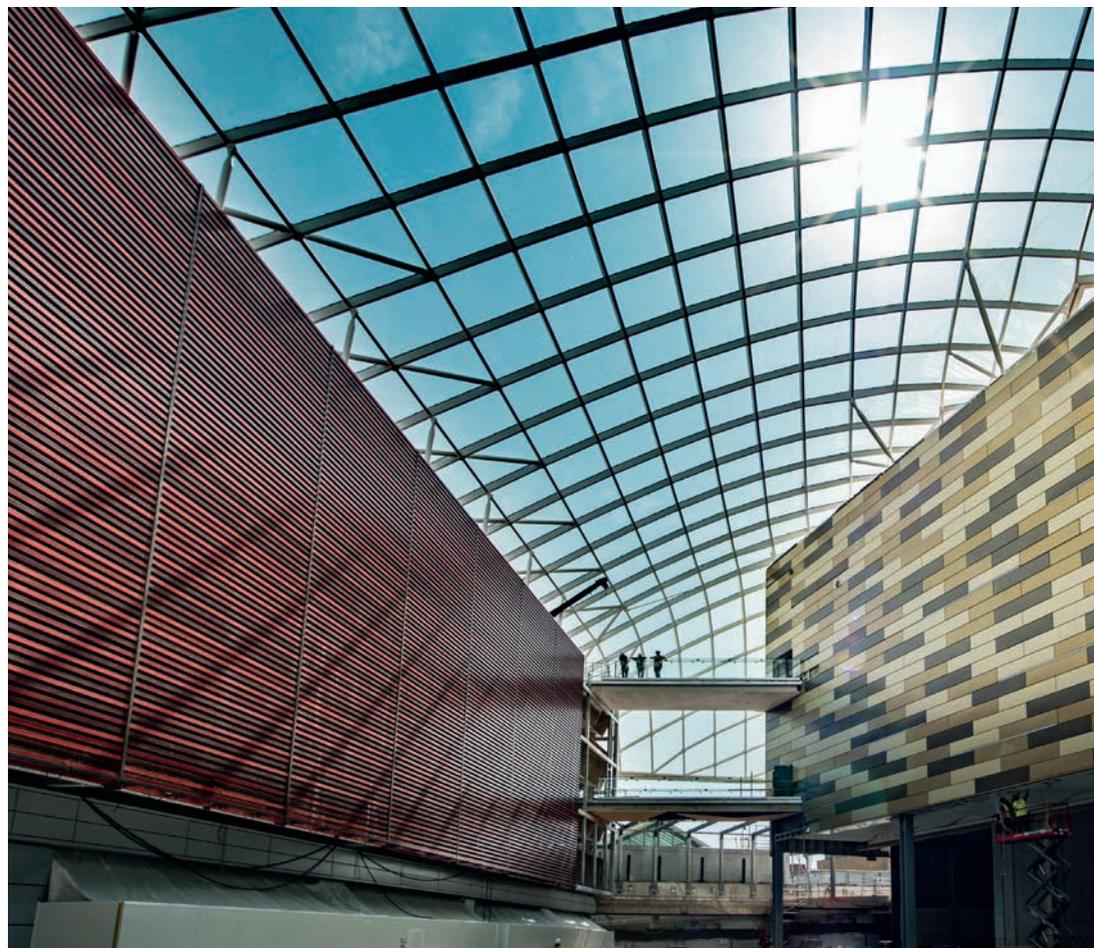
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WELCOME

Welcome to the September edition of SpecFinish. While many of us are returning from or embarking on our summer vacations, FIS members continue to reveal some impressive new projects and we've enjoyed learning about some of these and writing about them in our news pages.

'Contractors Corner', a new section where we will look to focus on topical subjects and commissions amongst contractors, makes its debut appearance in this issue and we're keen to learn about new appointments and other developments or concerns we can share with other members – so do get in touch if you have anything you'd like to tell us about or learn more about.

This month's technical feature looks at tolerances, and getting things right first time, while in our trade feature, our guest contributor discusses the impact noise is having on customers and staff of many food and drink venues – and the difference ceilings can make.

Back in our May issue, we interviewed an FIS member championing the cause of mental health, and this month we delve further into the subject. The finishes and interiors sector has the highest rate of suicide than any other sector in the UK, with many hampered by anxiety and depression. Our Health & Safety article looks at the importance of Mental Health First Aiders.



'Contractors Corner', a new section where we will focus on topical subjects and commissions amongst contractors, makes its debut appearance in this issue.'

Stephanie Cornwall

Editor



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David heads up Clarkslegal's construction, engineering and environmental projects group. He represents developers, owner/occupiers, main contractors, subcontractors and consultants.



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Simon has more than 30 years' experience in the construction industry, specialising in dispute resolution in the infrastructure, energy, PFI/PPP and subsea/offshore sectors.



Tim Ladd, Red Umbrella

Tim is the managing director of Red Umbrella, a bespoke mental health EAP and training provider, and works with a wide range of industries across the UK offering mental health support.



IAIN MCILWEE
Chief executive
Finishes and
Interiors Sector



CONSTRUCTION'S OWN CREDIT CRUNCH – PAY BETTER OR PERISH!

At FIS we spend as much time as possible talking to members and often use the Quality Framework Product, Process, People to shape these discussions (watch out for the new Quality Assurance Toolkit we're launching this month).

But conversation invariably dwells on the people and moves to an extra P - payment. The complexity of managing a flexible workforce takes a toll, where to find people, how to find people, how to check they are up for the job and how to stop them disappearing off for an extra couple of quid when we do. Employing people can be stressful, but subcontracting them is surely harder? But, how can we change the game when we are surrounded by uncertainty and even the basics of how much and when we get paid even more so?

Are we in danger of talking about the symptom and not the cause? Retentions are a blunt instrument to deal with quality, but they are also a line of cheap credit. Late payment can only be about working capital (it is not like there is any meaningful interest rates out there now).

The Insolvency Service reported that it has recorded 4,321 corporate insolvencies in England and Wales in the second quarter of 2019. Stripping out "bulk" insolvencies that have resulted from a new tax rule, this is the highest level over the past five years. How and when you cut statistics can be used to prove almost anything, but truth is it feels a bit tighter. In light of this, most of us have

stopped thinking of ourselves as Brexiteers or Remainers - more a Stop Posturing and Do Your Job-ers. Most businesses would probably prefer a deal, but the world is not binary and the doomsday 'No- Deal' scenarios don't yet know what policy decisions will follow and how construction investment will be driven. We simply don't know what the Government is planning. Hopefully it will dedicate a chunk of that £39 billion to construction but whatever happens on 31 October, I think the future of many companies will rest less on the supply and demand, and more on credit.

The market has been buoyant over the past couple of years, but we've already seen a number of well-known fit-out brands falling into administration. Seemingly healthy companies can unravel if they take their eye off the cash for a second or find themselves falling behind on a large project. We're not talking about wholesale mismanagement, but with all the rebates, retentions and hidden penalties in our contracts, even when there is sufficient cash in the job, it often isn't where it is supposed to be, when it is supposed to be there and when it does arrive it is often short owing to a few damaged doors and an unforeseen delay. The size and complexity of the projects we undertake leave businesses in construction relatively thin veneers over deep projects and, consequently, we are more exposed than many, but the flexibility of the workforce helps us to manage this. The bigger challenge now is that the

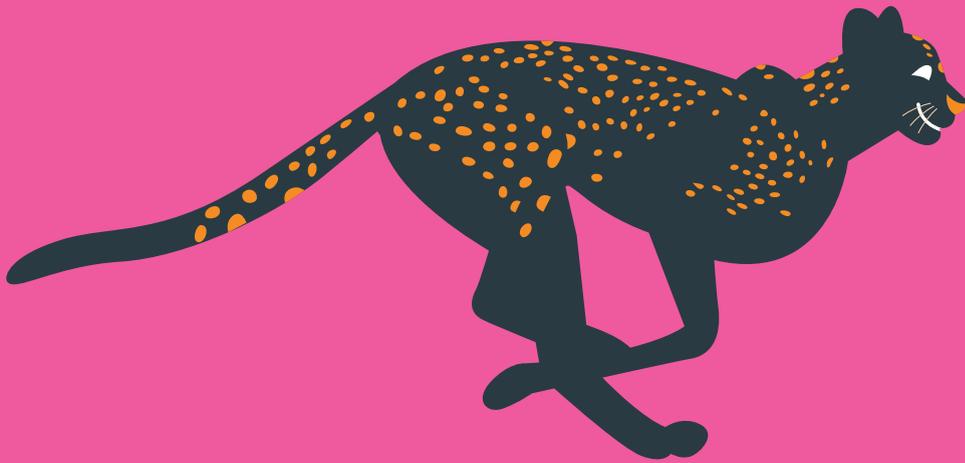
Carillion effect seems to have spooked the financial sector and the usual buffers of credit and credit insurance are retreating.

If we are to change payment, we need to consider credit at the top of the supply chain too. The Tier 1s have to date had a line of cheap credit through retentions and late payment from the supply chain. The challenge we have now is that even if they want to change, can they replace this from elsewhere? In this climate it seems unlikely.

Over the coming months the Reverse Charge VAT system will further put a strain on cash and, even offering your firstborn and house, banks seem reluctant to extend overdrafts. It could make for a tough time for many specialist contractors, not because there isn't money in construction or that they are not successfully finding and delivering work, but because the cash isn't where it is supposed to be, when it is supposed to be.

So I think the big policy ask from our new Government has to be around credit. Whatever the Brexit Deal or No-Deal looks like, we need to fix the credit crunch in construction. We introduced the Export Credit Guarantee Scheme to support exporters and to help them to manage risk and reach further into the world, I think we need something similar to help construction evolve. Through Construction 2025 and the Farmer Review, the Government identified how the construction sector should evolve. The Farmer Review demanded that we modernise or die. It may even be simpler than that – pay better or perish!

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Classic and contemporary combination in Mayfair fit-out

Fit out specialist Portview has completed a project in the heart of Mayfair with the restoration of a grade II listed townhouse at one of London's most illustrious addresses for the rental market.

Working in close collaboration with Schiller Beynon Interior Design, Shape London, and Cumming Corporation, Portview uncovered a number of classical period features that were incorporated in the new contemporary interior.

Spread over five floors, the spacious property required restoration that was compatible with modern living whilst retaining historical integrity. A standout feature is the 19th century staircase which

frames a large beam of natural light that cascades down from the lantern atrium and radiates throughout the interior.



Stylish fit-out provided for Sheffield Digital Campus site

Commercial interior design and fit-out specialist Ovo Spaces has completed work on a major new Sheffield city office development.

Acero is the latest phase of Sheffield's Digital Campus at Concourse Way, between Sheffield Hallam University and the city's train station, offering clients a combination of large and flexible floor spaces.

The brief for Ovo Spaces was to provide a welcoming reception area, co-working space, waiting area, private working and informal meeting space that would attract new commercial tenants.

Creative design manager Sophie Kendall said: "This was an exciting brief for us in a development that is right at the heart of Sheffield's innovative Digital Campus. The clients wanted an approach that would live up to the needs of a building that prides itself on energy efficiency, prominence and prestige.

"We achieved this in many different ways, including the use of furniture that can be utilised for multiple use in waiting area, informal meeting space, private working and co-working.

"We also created lockers and changing rooms ideal for the sort of client Acero aims to attract and came up with exciting new signage to enhance access to all areas of the building."

www.ovospaces.co.uk

FIS Conference: Rethinking Construction

FIS has pulled together a team of experts from across construction to look at how the sector and our businesses need to evolve for its Rethinking Construction conference on 19 November.

The event, which will take place at the Hilton Hotel, St George's Park, Burton upon Trent, will touch on the failings of Grenfell, the uncertain economic and political backdrop, productivity issues, off-site thinking and the tidal wave of digital technology.

Amongst those giving talks and holding breakout sessions are Helen Tapper, FIS president, Dr Noble Francis, economics director of the Construction Products Association, Martin Taylor, commercial director of the Local Building Control, Gavin Dunn, CEO of CABB, Tim Ladd, MD of Red Umbrella and David Rintoul, partner of Clarkslegal.

Topics include 'Making sense of the UK economy post Brexit', fire safety in construction, defect-free construction, wellbeing and the workforce, and the art of getting paid.

For more details please visit www.thefis.org/events/fis-conference-rethinking-construction.



Happy birthday Paramount!

Paramount Interiors has celebrated its 30th birthday, with staff toasting three decades of the company creating workplace designs and helping to deliver fit-out projects for businesses up and down the country. Managing director Richard Jones paid tribute to clients and subcontractors that the company has worked with over the years.

www.paramountinteriors.com

Efficiency and accuracy rewarded

SIG has named Rockfon UK as its most efficient and accurate supplier of 2019. Rockfon UK & ROI sales director Nigel Watkins was invited to the SIG Distribution manufacturers briefing session where outstanding service is acknowledged and rewarded.

The decision on who should receive accolades is based on feedback from SIG Distribution branch personnel and their central operations team.

Rockfon UK and ROI sales director Nigel Watkins is pictured receiving the award from SIG Interiors operation director Rupert Tubbs.



ACCESS 360

Three brands join forces with one safe access objective in mind

Three UK access specialists have united to form the Access 360 portfolio, providing a total manufacturing solution for roof, ceiling, wall and floor access products for the construction industry.

Access 360 now comprises Bilco UK, Profab Access and Howe Green, all of whom address the challenges of safe access within a building or external environment, following Bilco UK's acquisition of the other two companies within the past two years.

Bilco UK is a horizontal access specialist supplying the commercial market with standard and bespoke roof access hatches, ladders, smoke vents and floor doors. Founded in the USA in 1926 the company has been operating in the UK since 1989.

It acquired Howe Green, which manufactures fabricated floor access covers, linear drainage, tree pit covers and bespoke metalwork from a manufacturing facility in Hertfordshire, in 2017. A year later, in August 2018, it acquired Profab

Access, a leading manufacturer of vertical access panels, riser doors and steel doors, which operates from a manufacturing and distribution facility in Warwickshire.

The strategic acquisitions of Howe Green and Profab Access were designed to strengthen Bilco UK's 'safe access all areas' proposition. The three companies serve the same market, working with architects, specifiers and building service professionals to provide safe access solutions.

Managing director of Access 360, James Fisher, said: "Since the acquisition of Howe Green and Profab Access, we have been promoting our ability to provide an unparalleled range of access solutions. From an operational perspective, it soon became obvious that we needed a name and an identity that could encompass all three companies, whilst retaining the established and trusted brand names."

www.access-360.co.uk

Gritty process for raw look

A sanding process using coarse grit was used to produce RCM's new product, Swisspearl Vintago façade. The coloured fibre cement panels have a sanded surface, which gives a raw, natural look. The new product features anti-graffiti coating and colour durability, which are recommended for inner-city applications. www.buildingboards.co.uk

Increased computer vision tech take-up envisaged

More construction firms are likely to take advantage of computer vision technology as cloud computing resources increase, prices fall and the number of suppliers in the market increases, it has been claimed.

IT firm Agmis believes technologies such as its Easyflow CV software are evolving and becoming more affordable to small and medium construction enterprises, which will lead to increased take-up. Such technology can identify worker actions and detect whether safety equipment is being worn and used. If a PPE violation is detected, it can notify site safety officers in real time, while infringements are stored in a database with corresponding video footage.

FIS member Chalkstring has also said cloud-based technology is becoming more and more popular with subcontractors.

Managing director Barry Chapman said: "We're seeing contractors becoming more comfortable with using cloud software to run their business and projects, given they use and trust cloud services like Gmail, Spotify and Netflix in their personal lives." He said project teams can access real-time information and control costs, making it easier for them to deliver more successful projects.

www.easyflow.biz
www.chalkstring.com

Collaborating with the Principal

QIC Trims, which manufactures trims for the interior fit-out sector, has manufactured and supplied one of the largest residential projects in London, Principal Tower.

It assisted the architectural team by designing and extruding more than 5000 lin/m of blind box to suit roller blinds as well as curtains for the 50-story residential project and further projects are now in the pipeline with the same development team.

Principal Tower is the landmark apartment tower within Principal Place, a stylish new mixed-use development on the edge of London in the borough of Hackney. At 175 metres, it will be one of London's tallest residential buildings. The tower appears as three slim volumes. Towards the residential neighbourhood of Shoreditch, it appears lower from ground level, while from the west it reflects the high-rise nature of the city. A central volume rises up between the two.

The 50-storey building offers a variety of apartment sizes, topped by a single, duplex penthouse. Layouts maximise the living area, with bedrooms enclosed by solid cladding panels for privacy and the remainder fully glazed and protected by shading fins.



New resources available on Lorient website

Lorient, a designer and manufacturer of sealing systems for door assemblies, has launched a new website with an enhanced search functionality and a new resource centre featuring a CAD and fitting instruction library, FAQs, a glossary, videos and animations.

Lorient's Acoustic Search app, which provides access to hundreds of tested acoustic sealing systems on a variety of popular door constructions and configurations, has also been redeveloped. www.lorientuk.com

New Trailblazer Apprenticeship assigned £14K funding for delivery

FIS has secured £14K funding for the delivery of the new Interior Systems Trailblazer Apprenticeship in collaboration with a host of industry partners.

This flagship project has been a culmination of three years of work resulting in the development of a Level 2 Apprenticeship. The Interior Systems occupations are both skilled and very diverse in their needs and hence it was very important to develop a model that is fit for purpose and simple for sector delivery. The end result is a Level 2 Apprenticeship that provides a core and two pathway options across a minimum of 18-month delivery.

The working group, chaired by Helen Tapper from Tapper Interiors and vice president of FIS, comprised a broad group of representatives from the whole sector, including manufacturers, subcontractors, colleges and training providers to ensure all stakeholder perspectives were covered. FIS co-ordinated the development with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

FIS vice president Helen Tapper said: "This is the first time that a 'Trailblazer'

Apprenticeship has been developed for our sector since FIS became a consensus federation. This gives our sector the status and recognition that it so rightly deserves. It was an honour to chair a group who worked methodically and thoroughly to produce a standard, that is fit for the future of our sector. I am grateful to all group members who so readily gave their time to produce both the standard and the end point assessment."

The working group agreed that a core and pathway options approach was the only way to provide the sector with the right skilled outcomes for each individual entering the industry.

The core incorporates the standard skills and knowledge required of any interior systems installer and requires an end point assessment separate to a final one for their chosen specialist area. The options are:

- Drylining - methods to install different drylining systems that form the walls and rooms within a building, often used to hide wires and pipes whilst improving acoustics and create space for insulation.

- Ceiling and partitions - incorporates different ceiling and partition systems within a building, used to provide different types of working environments, taking account of lighting and other fixtures.

Training providers and further education colleges are now being invited to apply to deliver the standard in readiness for the new academic year.

FIS has already received interest from employers in all regions interested in taking on new apprentices identified through the forward planning of FIS Skills Clinics it has run with members. FIS has developed a network of college and training provision that underpins all the training developed for the sector and is looking to extend this.

Iain McIlwee, FIS CEO said:

"Hopefully, now this standard is available for delivery we can widen the network to enable more employers to access and encourage new entrants into the industry. This new standard will help raise awareness of the fantastic career opportunities and attract the 1500 new entrants needed in the finishes and interiors sector."

Enhanced protection for structural steel

A new fire-rated board that provides enhanced protection for structural steel has been launched by passive fire protection specialist Promat.

Vermiculux-S has been developed to protect steel at limiting temperatures up to 750°C. The A1 non-combustible calcium silicate board provides up to 240 minutes of fire resistance for steel beams and columns in high-risk industrial buildings and public areas that need extended fire protection. It is moisture resistant and comes in a range of thicknesses.

Andy Mudie, head of product management at Etex Building Performance, the parent company of Promat, said: "There's a growing demand for materials to support industrial and public facilities that have extended fire protection needs, particularly as the warehousing and data centre markets continue to expand.

www.promat.co.uk



Historic hotel brought back to life

A Grade II listed hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon has undergone a £13.2 million restoration which has included a new interior fit-out while preserving its historic exterior. The 16th century three-storey Hotel Indigo, formerly known as The Falcon Hotel, features 93 boutique bedrooms. Construction firm Stephnell carried out the work.

Cutting-edge Dyson Institute completed

Rockfon's acoustic ceiling systems have been specified within the new communal Roundhouse building on the campus at the Sir James Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology.

The Roundhouse is a two-storey communal clubhouse for undergraduate engineers living at the Dyson Student Village, containing a library, café, bar and screening room and 220 panels of bespoke Rockfon Eclipse® ceiling islands have been installed there.

Architectural practice Wilkinson Eyre designed and oversaw the project.

Rockfon Eclipse can be hung from several kinds of structures including wood, steel and concrete soffits where traditional suspended ceilings cannot usually be installed. The islands absorb sound on both sides, helping to reduce reverberation time and improve ambient sound levels.

www.rockfon.co.uk

Fit-out firm inspires next generation

Commercial fit-out company, JBH Refurbishments, committed to inspiring the next generation of architects, interior designers and construction workers, after teaming up with FIS to launch a regional competition in primary schools in the south east to design the 'best classroom ever'.

The competition provided an opportunity for children to put their creative and methodical skills to the test. Teachers across the region got involved, using the competition as an art lesson, a computer lesson and even setting it as homework. Consequently, JBH Refurbishments was inundated with entries, but only two winners could take the £250 prize money.

Florence Mannell, age 11 of Staplehurst School won the key stage 2 category and Penny Bates, age 7 of Thames View School in Gillingham won the key stage 1 category. Both were personally congratulated by the JBH team and presented with their prize.

Director of JBH Refurbishments, Babs Hubbard said: "We wanted to do our bit to encourage the next generation to consider careers as architects, interior designers and construction workers. We were really encouraged by the high level of entries from such young people. The creativity and attention to detail was overwhelming."

Florence of 6C class at Staplehurst embraced her passion for reading. Her design featured a secret library, books that come to life, a giant calculator and a range of tech to aid learning.

Florence leaves primary school this year for High Weald Academy but has used the prize money to leave her legacy



at Staplehurst School. The £250 has been spent on her favourite books for her fellow students, which will feature a 'Florence Recommends' stamp and will be available in a special section of the school library.

Penny Bates, who is in year two at Thames View School in Gillingham, designed a Monopoly board inspired classroom, which impressed the judges for its originality. The square desks were arranged to create the shape of the game. Each table acts as a place on the board and provides a different task, such as reading, baking, art and fun maths. In the middle of the tables is a giant die.

Penny and her teacher, Mrs Bradshaw, intend to spend the money on a selection board games and some dressing-up for Penny's year three class, ready for when they return in September.

Helping the directors from JBH Refurbishments with the judging process was Iain McIlwee, CEO of FIS who said: "We hope that all the entrants will now be inspired to enjoy building and possibly enter the #iBuiltThis2019 competition run by FIS."



#iBuiltThis builds on project pride to promote construction careers

The closing date for the FIS #iBuiltThis2019 competition is fast approaching. The competition, which is now in its third year, is a visual campaign that draws on the pride construction workers take when they see finished projects that they have worked on and use this to promote construction as a career choice for young people.

Closing date for submissions is 15 September and winners will be announced at the #iBuiltThis awards ceremony at UK Construction Week on 8 October.

The construction industry employs around 3.1 million people, equivalent to one in 10 people working in the UK. #iBuiltThis aims to celebrate this through social media. Individuals and companies are urged to highlight excellent work carried out by new starters or apprentices, as an initiative to help engage with a local school, college or even Scout group, make entering an activity for a young person on work experience or encourage their own children to enter.

The competition has been divided into three age groups: 13 and under (family trip to Legoland with an overnight stay at Castle Hotel; 14-18 (an iPhone XR); 19 plus (a getaway for two adults in one of Canopy & Stars exclusive properties in the UK).

Entrants are required to share a photo of themselves with the image of a completed project they have built, or helped to build, and enter on the competition platform. FIS is encouraging schools and colleges to get fully engaged with and run their own mini #iBuiltThis competitions and enter the finalists and winners via a secure platform. A special prize for the most engaged school or college will be awarded to the institution that makes the most entries.

The competition is open to everyone who has a passion for building, construction, design, fit-out, interiors and more. Entrants are encouraged to be as creative as possible, whether it's a model, a physical structure, building, drawing or even a digital design using software. They are free to use any material for their build.

Sponsors include UK Construction Week, Silver Trowel, Building Heroes, CSCS, Astins, Sir Robert McAlpine and Michelmersh Brick Holdings and the judging panel comprises industry leaders, advocates and educators.

The competition will be judged on the best creative picture and best response to the question asked within each age category. The public vote will make up 50% of the overall scores. The remaining 50% of the scores will be ranked in order by the judging panel.

www.thefis.org/skills-hub/i-built-this-2019-competition



THE LOWDOWN ON ENHANCEMENTS

Joe Cilia discusses workmanship tolerances in drylining, what the standards say and how to manage client expectations.

THE acceptable tolerances or deviation when installing drylining are included within the workmanship clauses in a specification, but are they always standard or are enhanced tolerances being asked for as standard which can lead to disputes on site?

What is acceptable, what can be done to ensure clients are satisfied with the end result so that you get paid?

Let's start by looking at what the British standards say.

BS 8212: 1995 Code of practice for drylining and partitions using gypsum plasterboard, describes the deviations and tolerances of the finished surfaces. Tolerances are also described in *BS 8000-8: 1994* Workmanship on building sites – code of practice for plasterboard partitions and linings. These are the same as the *BS 8212* requirements.

Where the framework of a partition or a lining is independent of the structure, the deviation from the setting out positions should be within the following tolerances:

- The offset on plan from an agreed line or position, measured at the setting out level (ceiling or floor) $\pm 3\text{mm}$
- The offset from vertical, measured above or below the setting out position (ceiling or floor) $\pm 5\text{mm}$

Finished surfaces of partitions and independent linings

The deviations in the position of a finished surface of a partition or lining from the straight line connecting end points of the partition should be within a band of 10mm (see figure 1).

The measurements should be taken at approximately 600mm above finished floor level and should be accompanied by measurements of the partitions or linings vertically at the measuring points and should be within the 10mm band.

It is not uncommon for these requirements to be amended when a higher standard of workmanship tolerances is required and it will be necessary to use enhanced methods of setting out, installation and checking when this is specified.

Control samples: It is recommended to install a control sample that can be maintained in an area where it can be referenced throughout the contract. This will be invaluable in the case of any dispute over the quality of the installation. This is especially true where enhanced tolerances are requested.

Crown of joint (tape and jointing): The maximum increase should not exceed 3mm when measured using a 450mm straightedge (see figure 2).

External angles (tape and jointing): The maximum increase should not exceed 4mm projection from either face.

“The flatness of the plastered finish will depend upon the accuracy to which the background has been constructed and the thickness of the plaster specified.”



Internal angles (tape and jointing): The maximum increase should not exceed 5mm projection from either face (see figure 3). The increased thickness of the partition should be not more than 4mm around openings (door heads, access panels etc). These tolerances are specific to tape and jointing, where noted.

To avoid stepping when using C studs it is recommended that the boarding sequence is carried out as recommended by the system supplier, which may vary.

Plastering

BS EN 13914-2: 2016 Design, preparation and application of external rendering and internal plastering Part 2: Internal Plastering states: "The flatness of the plastered finish will depend upon the accuracy to which the background has been constructed and the thickness of the plaster specified. Thinner applications of plaster will only overcome minor irregularities or small deviations from line of the background. In general, no tolerance can be laid down for very thin plaster coats since these will closely follow the contour of the background."

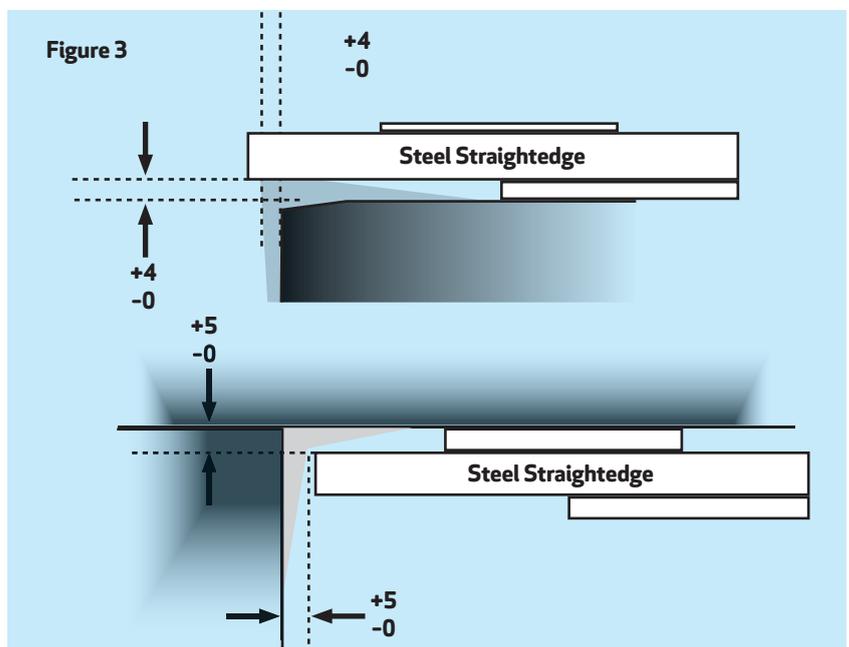
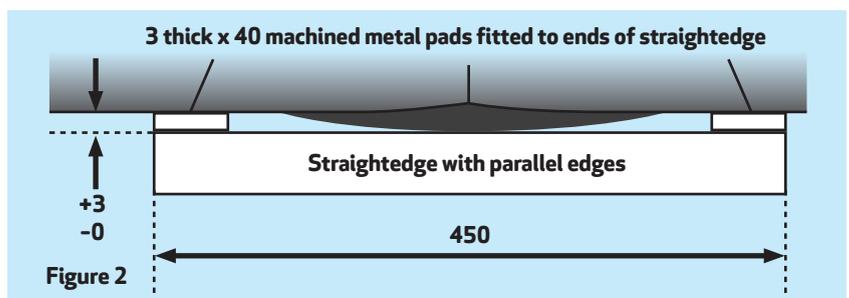
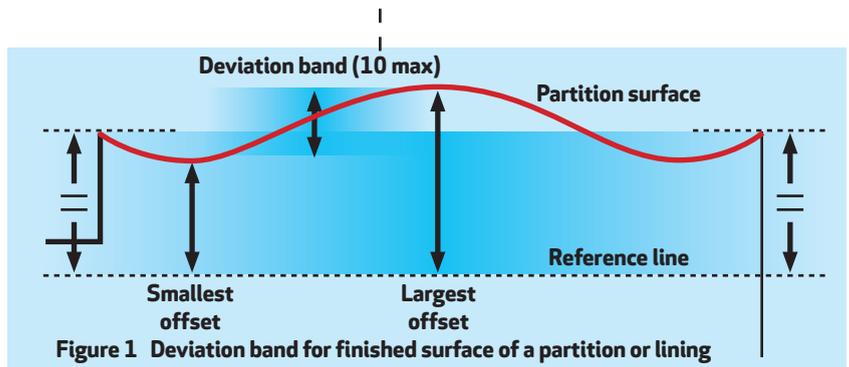
Where there are no specific enhanced tolerances specified, it would be standard practice to use the tolerances stated for the drylining and ceiling specification and in BS 8212 and BS EN 13964 as the standard to be achieved for the skim.

The natural glancing light, such as from full height windows, should be known and this should be included in a specification. The level of lighting will have a critical effect on the appearance of the finished surface, so any temporary lighting conditions should simulate the same or higher lighting conditions produced by the final permanent installation.

Inspecting the completed work

When inspecting completed plasterwork for acceptance, surfaces should be viewed from the entrance doorway and from the centre of the room in a normal domestic house and from about two metres away from the surface in larger areas. BS EN 13914-2 states that contract documentation should specify if the final lighting of any surface is to fall at glancing angles.

Inspecting finished surfaces with LED lights held against the work is not an acceptable method of inspection.



FIND OUT MORE

FIS offers an independent advisory service which reports on site issues including plaster finishes. Visit www.thefis.org/membership-hub/memberbenefits/fis-advisory-service for more details.

THE ART OF GETTING PAID

David Rintoul discusses the burdens associated with late payments and provides some tips for contractors on ensuring they get paid fairly and timely.



David is a partner of Clarkslegal LLP and heads up the firm's construction, engineering and environmental projects group. He represents all sectors of the industry including public and private sector developers and owner/occupiers, main contractors, specialist subcontractors and professional consultants.

He is also a non-executive director and former past chairman of the Building Services Research and Information Association, an advisory board member of the Confederation of Construction Specialists and co-chairs the construction and real estate speciality group for the international network TAGLaw.

Recovering overdue money carries a significant administrative burden and cost. It also has a negative impact on commercial relationships, acting as a barrier to the development of strategic and collaborative relationships and inhibiting investment in productivity. The government is committed to improving payment practices by working with industry on proposals to improve contractual and payment practices.

We wait to see how this develops. In the meantime, here are some tips on getting paid.

Agree fair payment terms

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 ("Construction Act") requires that construction contracts contain specific provisions relating to payment and a right to adjudicate at any time. If the contract does not comply, then the Government's Scheme for Construction Contracts ("Scheme") applies.

The contract must provide for an adequate mechanism for payment and the parties are free to set their own payment intervals, which must not run out before you complete the works as it may not be possible to apply for any interim payments after the last date in the schedule.

If the scheme applies, there is a payment period of 17 days from the due date to the final date for payment.

By the Public Contract Regulations 2015, 30-day payment terms are included in all public sector supply chain contracts. In addition, from September 2019 any supplier who bids for a government contract in excess of £5million per year will be expected to pay 95% of invoices in 60 days across all of their businesses.

Use a project bank account

Project bank accounts can help ensure secure and regular payments and protect against the risk of upstream insolvency. Monies in a project

bank account are held in trust by the overall client and the main contractor and the project participants are paid out of the same account.

Retentions

It is common for cash retentions (typically 3 to 5% of the contract sum) to be held back by contractors and clients in case of defective work. The contract usually provides that the retention will be released in two equal parts, at practical completion and at expiry of the defects liability period. However, it is common to experience difficulties recovering this money. It is estimated that more than £10.5 billion of SME working capital is locked in retentions annually.

There are ongoing discussions about changes to retentions. Suggested alternatives include an overall ban on retentions and a proposal to hold monies in a retention deposit scheme. Any retention deducted should be held in a separate designated trust account.

An alternative to deduction of retention is possible use of a retention bond, which can be expensive to provide but may be acceptable to the employer and/or any funders.

Getting notices right

By the Construction Act, the payer has two opportunities to set out its calculation of the sum due in an initial payment notice (issued within five days of the due date) and a later pay less notice (if the scheme applies, issued seven days before the final date for payment). If these notices are not provided, or invalid, then the payee may issue its own notice or sometimes rely on its initial application for payment.

The sum to be paid by the final date for payment (the "notified sum") is the sum stated in:

1. The payment notice
2. The pay less notice
3. In absence of 1 and 2, the sum stated in a payee's notice which may be the application for payment.

It is vital that the parties issue the relevant notices in accordance with the relevant contractual timing and content requirements. Many payment disputes arise as a result of failure to issue a notice in time or in the correct format or even to the correct address. Technology may assist here and there are some collaborative platforms that allow contractors, subcontractors and consultants to process payment applications and manage payment.

Right to suspend

The Construction Act also includes a right to suspend (or part suspend) works for non-payment of the notified sum by the final date for payment. This requires seven days' prior written notice and the unpaid party can claim the costs and expenses and an extension of time as a result of any suspension. Again, any notices must be issued in accordance with the contract to avoid the unpaid party putting itself in breach.

Chasing payment and sources of help

Businesses should have their own internal processes for chasing outstanding payments and usually correspondence will be exchanged before formal proceedings are commenced. The Small Business Commissioner website contains some useful information for small businesses on late payment and also has a complaints scheme.

Adjudication

Parties to a construction contract can refer a dispute at any time to adjudication, a process introduced by the Construction Act to speed up payment down the supply chain. The parties will appoint a third party adjudicator to give a decision on the dispute within 28 days or as may be extended by agreement. The decision is binding on the parties unless, and up to the point when, it is overturned by a court or arbitrator (depending on the contract).

In a recent case, *S&T (UK) Ltd v Grove Developments Ltd* (2018) the Court of Appeal said that in the absence of a valid payment or pay less notice, the employer would first have to pay the contractor (and, by analogy, a main contractor would have to pay a subcontractor) the amount due (i.e. the notified sum in the application for payment) before it could argue in a separate adjudication about the true valuation of the account at any point in time.

Interest

Don't forget to claim interest on any late payment, usually at a contract specified rate. Alternatively, the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act requires interest to be paid at 8% above the Bank of England Base Rate, plus a fixed sum and compensation for debt recovery costs.

“Don't forget to claim interest on any late payment, usually at a contract specified rate.”

Build UK moves forward on achieving zero retentions

Build UK has reached a major milestone on the roadmap to zero retentions by publishing new minimum standards designed to reduce the existing challenges associated with the use of cash retentions.

The Minimum Standards on Retentions, which provides detailed drafting guidance for incorporating them into both JCT and NEC forms of contract, are based on a number of principles, including:

- Any arrangements for retention are no more onerous than those implemented by the client in the Tier 1 contract
- Retentions are only deducted from payments made in respect of permanent works
- Any retention is deducted from the payment immediately following practical completion
- Retentions should be progressively phased out on the basis of contract value.

Fair and transparent payment practices are essential for a successful construction industry, but the practice of cash retentions has proven problematic for all parties in the supply chain.

The updated Roadmap to Zero Retentions, first published by Build UK in 2017, sets out specific actions in a phased approach for the construction industry to achieve zero retentions.

Whilst Build UK continues to push for Government legislation to abolish cash retention, supported by the roadmap, Government has not yet made any commitment to deliver policy change on this issue.

Jo Fautley, deputy chief executive of Build UK, said: “Build UK is proactively delivering on its roadmap to zero retentions, and clients, contractors and the supply chain can all implement these practicable steps as part of the transition over the next few years. The construction industry needs to change, and achieving zero retentions is a vital part of becoming a more collaborative and efficient sector.”

Peter Rogers, co-founder of Lipton Rogers, said he was pleased to see the work that Build UK is doing to eliminate the use of retentions through its roadmap.

“With over 30 years' experience of not using retentions on our projects, we are firmly convinced that they add nothing of benefit, and are often used by the industry to improve cash flow, without improving the quality of construction,” he said.

His comments were echoed by Brian Morrisroe, chief executive of Morrisroe Group.

He said: “Retentions have always been difficult for us to manage and a realistic plan of how the industry could move forward on this issue is most welcome. If clients that do feel the need to withhold a cash retention start to use the new minimum standards in their contracts, it will make a real difference to businesses like ours. Retentions starve the supply chain of much needed working capital but clients will need confidence that we can address the quality issues often experienced in the defects period to enable a move away from retentions.”



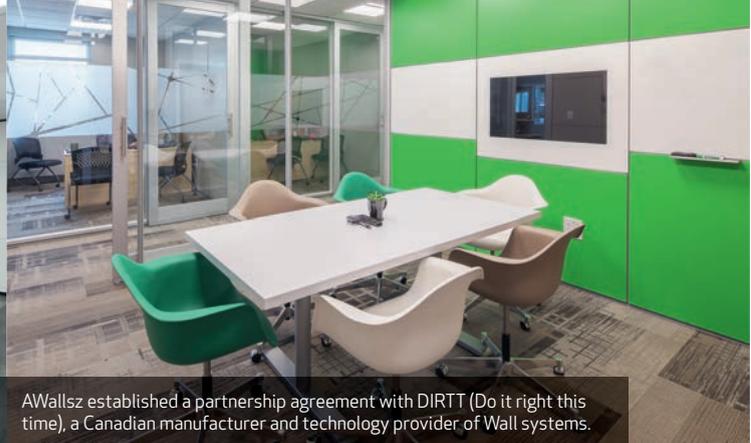
FIND OUT MORE

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner (SBC) was launched in December 2017 to ensure fair payment practices for Britain's small businesses and support them in resolving their payment disputes with larger businesses and bring about culture change.

Visit www.smallbusinesscommissioner.gov.uk for further details.



Incorporating nature scenes within your workspace comes with a whole host of benefits for employees, including higher employee satisfaction and attentiveness



AWallsz established a partnership agreement with DIRTT (Do it right this time), a Canadian manufacturer and technology provider of Wall systems.

CHAMPIONING THE ACOUSTIC CAUSE

Stephanie Cornwall talks to **Ian Strangward** about his career shift from manufacturing to contracting, and why he's passionate about noise reduction.



Ian Strangward

“One of the big issues in the sector at the moment is acoustic performance of glass wall systems. There is scepticism and concern amongst many of the specialist contractors about acoustic data being presented for airborne sound insulation.”

The value of good acoustic data is a topic close to the heart of FIS' Partition Industry working group chairman, Ian Strangward, who is keen to promote good practice, champion new initiatives and look at different approaches.

Ian, the managing director of Architectural Wallsz (AWallsz), has been chairing the Partition Industry working group for the past four years.

“My previous company Apton Partitioning Limited (a manufacturer and designer of wall systems for the commercial office market) had been a member of the FIS for many years. In 2015, following the sale of Apton, we established AWallsz as a subcontract fit out company. We are a specialist glass partitioning, glazed and solid partitioning contractor, offering a range of state of the art glazed screen systems from a number of premier UK manufacturers including solid systems, glass doors, sliding glass doors and fire glazed screens.

“When the Partition Industry Working Group was established, I was nominated as chair by two of the other manufacturers. One of them stated that with my experience gained as a former manufacturer, this would provide an independent chair for a group of competitors. I have been re-elected by the group each year, so I think it is fair to say that I can provide an informed, but independent view.”

Having graduated in 1982, Ian is a chartered engineer who spent most of his early career in automotive manufacturing, in various roles, for Lucas Industries and GKN. Ian progressed rapidly and was appointed plant director of GKN Driveshafts, managing more than 500 staff manufacturing prop shafts for rear wheel drive cars and 4-wheel drive sports utility vehicles (SUVs).

In 1994, Ian decided to acquire his own manufacturing business and has been an owner manager since that time. He subsequently owned and ran several small manufacturing businesses ranging from sheet metal work, joinery, glass

processing and partitioning. There was a common link in that the businesses were manufacturing products and systems for the construction industry. “It seemed like a natural progression to move into the contracting arena for my next challenge,” said Ian.

In 2018, AWallsz established a partnership agreement with DIRTT (a Canadian manufacturer and technology provider of wall systems). DIRTT stands for Do it right this time.

“Build the perfect interior space for what you need now - and whatever the future brings. Design to respond to your needs for any place, from healthcare to education or office. This is digital construction at its best,” said Ian.

The business has grown steadily since its inception and recently the company moved to Bordesley Hall in Alvechurch, near Birmingham, and now employs seven full-time staff. The team is supported by a range of subcontract glaziers, joiners and partitioning installers.

Ian was recently asked to be the FIS representative on the judging panel of the Acoustic Awards for the Association of Noise Consultants and was invited to attend the association's awards dinner in Manchester in June.

He is a real driving force behind work to put a new acoustic data verification process in place for FIS members.

“One of the big issues in the sector at the moment is acoustic performance of glass wall systems. There is scepticism and concern amongst many of the specialist contractors about acoustic data being presented for airborne sound insulation. The Partition Industry working group established a system to help standardise the way that data is presented and a process to independently verify the data,” he said.

“We have introduced a verification process in partnership with specialist acoustic consultants Cundall, to verify the data from the manufacturers. This will mean that any verified data on the FIS

website meets the standard which includes working within agreed parameters of size and configuration so that data can be fairly compared with others; we want to encourage architects and main contractors to use data verified by the FIS and their appropriate manufacturers," said Ian. "It is a major step forward and will be in place within the next three to six months."

The working group is now tackling the issue of fire, in a similar way that it had approached acoustics. The process recently began, with a Fire data working group being formed which will focus on creating an FIS data verification process for fire resistance.

Despite meeting just four times a year, driving such initiatives has not been as tough as many might expect, as the level of enthusiasm for what the working group is doing is already apparent, said Ian. "They are always well attended.

Everyone is very keen on this and they want to raise the bar so that systems perform properly on site. A big drive from the FIS board is to adopt the 'PPP' initiative that FIS has developed in response to Dame Hackitt's recommendation, a real focus on the key elements of Product, Process and People. Everybody agrees with the direction we are trying to go in."

The biggest difficulty with both acoustic and fire performance is understanding the performance data being offered and the requirements we are being asked to meet, Ian pointed out.

"It's quite hard to get across," he said. "For example, understanding the specification required from a test report which gives parameters that apply to the products where the height is greater than a test sample may need further investigation, rather than rely on a simple data sheet. The new verification process and standardisation of data will help to overcome this," he said.

Learning from others

Working with Canadian and American wall system manufacturers, Ian has been learning about the different approaches taken in different parts of the world. In the USA, a lot of emphasis is placed on sound absorption performance and Ian would also like to see this adopted more in the UK, whereby "softer" materials possibly with micro perforations are used on walls to improve the acoustics of the room by creating sound absorption. In the USA many theatres, music venues and church projects are incorporating micro-perforated timber that provides a better acoustic setting for music and singing, for example.

"I do a lot of work in America and the American perspective on acoustics seems to be very different to the UK" he said. "Neither is right or wrong, but both could definitely learn from each other."

Over the past decade, acoustic awareness has improved in the industry but there is still a long way to go, said Ian.

In instances where an acoustic test is carried out following completion of a job, there is always

the risk that if the acoustic performance does not meet the specified requirements contractors can be forced to rework the job.

The FIS verification scheme is designed to reduce incorrect performance claims and to prevent contractors unfairly gaining jobs where they are not adhering to the same standard, and basically make it more of a level playing field," he said.

"Acoustics, like everything else falling under the focus of the Partition Industry Working Group, is ultimately about creating a healthier environment for the wellbeing of those working in the space and leading to better productivity," Ian stressed. "If people like their working environment, it helps employers with staff retention and can be a significant factor in attracting the best people to join a business."

Stand-out trends

There is more and more innovation and trends are developing in the interiors sector, which makes it both exciting and challenging at the same time. This year we have seen the growth of acoustic pods, individual phone booth style meeting rooms with charging points and timber framed freestanding rooms.

"We have a wall system called 'breathe' which mounts plants into DIRTT Walls with an automatic watering system. Designers can incorporate breathe living walls or Interior plantscapes, to bring nature indoors and beautify and detoxify interior spaces," said Ian.

"Incorporating nature scenes within your workspace comes with a whole host of benefits for employees, including higher employee satisfaction and attentiveness. Not to mention it really livens up a space."

Message to members

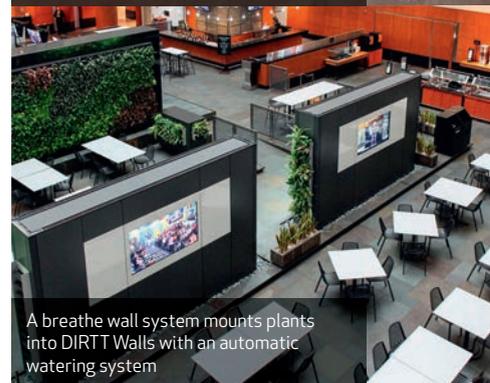
Ian is passionate about the FIS role in improving industry practice and has urged more members to 'spread the word'.

"There is still a huge job to do to build trust in construction and our part of the industry. Being involved in industry trade associations that have a code of practice which create the right value sets to drive standards is critical. As FIS members we can help and need to promote and build the FIS brand – to get across to people that FIS members are known for quality workmanship," he said. "I would encourage members to work hard to promote our trade association. We need to show our clients, no matter what area we're working in, that the FIS logo really means something.

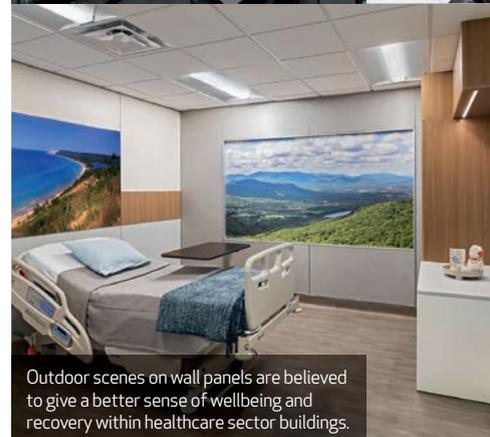
"I believe a powerful trade association enables people to compete on a level playing field and raise the performance of our members above those that do a poor job. At the end of the day, you would not employ anyone to replace or service your boiler if they weren't Gas Safe registered, so why have your ceilings and walls done by someone that isn't a member of FIS?"



This year we have seen the growth of acoustic pods, individual phone booth style meeting rooms with charging points and timber framed freestanding rooms.



A breathe wall system mounts plants into DIRTT Walls with an automatic watering system



Outdoor scenes on wall panels are believed to give a better sense of wellbeing and recovery within healthcare sector buildings.



FIND OUT MORE

Full details on the new acoustic standard are available in the FIS Acoustic Verification Scheme Manual, available on request via info@thefis.org

NEW APPOINTMENTS TO DRIVE GROWTH

Linear Group has announced a number of new appointments as the business continues to drive its growth ambitions.

Andrew Deacon joins the design and construct (LDC) team as site manager with primary responsibility for the delivery of the South Ayrshire Council rationalisation project at Ayr County Halls. Andrew previously spent five years working for Kier.

Alongside Andrew on the South Ayrshire project, Robert Andreucci has been appointed assistant site manager. He brings varied hands-on experience of fit-out and refurbishment to the Troon Municipal Buildings element of the project.

Whilst also on the Ayrshire project, Gary Weddle takes up the post of quantity surveyor following 12 years with Morris & Spottiswood. He will oversee subcontractor packages and the client contract.

Garry Willis has been appointed as health, safety and environmental manager. With more

than 20 years' senior managerial experience including roles with Stewart Milne Group and Balfour Beatty Utility Solutions, Garry will support LDC and Linear Projects

Olga Holewinska has become an estimator following 10 years' diverse experience in Scotland and Poland and the team has been further boosted by the addition of Catherine Keaveney, an administrator in the Manchester office, Aidan McLaughlin as a trainee buyer and Ian Taggart who is supporting the team on the Edinburgh St James project over the summer.

Stephen Holmes, CEO, Linear Group, said: "We continue to invest in talent as part of our overall growth strategy and are delighted to welcome such high calibre recruits to the team"



It's a hat-trick for BW

BW Workplace Experts has appointed a third managing director as part of a management shuffle to expand the business.

Max Steward, who worked for ISG for more than 10 years, has joined fellow managing directors Kevin Mulligan and Peter Nagle.



Change in leadership structure

ISG has unveiled a change in leadership structure for its UK fit-out business. The move follows the promotion of former managing director, Matt Blowers, to ISG's statutory board earlier this year as chief operating officer for ISG's global fit-out operations.



Lee Phillips, previously managing director for ISG's Agility business, is now managing director for ISG's UK fit-out business.

Nick Oddy, former operations director, has replaced Lee and now heads up ISG's Agility business as managing director.

Nick Oddy has risen through the ranks at ISG over the past six years, occupying senior roles within the London team, and most recently as operations director.

Matt Blowers, ISG's chief operating officer, said: "We have an exceptionally talented, innovative and loyal team in our fit-out business, and I'm delighted that Lee and Nick have both agreed to bring their considerable leadership skills to head our operations in the UK"

Ian steps into new roles

Ian Turner has taken on the role of group commercial director at GO Interiors Ltd.



Having joined the company last year as group procurement and business development manager, the appointment is a promotion for Ian, whose role will now include negotiating contracts with suppliers and customers and implementing strategies to drive growth and profitability

Prior to joining Go Interiors, Ian spent 25 years working in various roles for CCF. This included sales manager, branch manager, sales director and during the last 11 years as regional director for the south east region. In that time, Ian presided over the opening of five new branches and five branch relocations

Founded in 2002, GO Interiors is the largest independent specialist distributor in the interiors sector.

Non-executive role

Workplace consultant and interior fit-out specialist Blueprint Interiors has appointed Ian Guyler as a non-executive director. Based in Leicestershire, Ian has been acting as a consultant for the past 16 years and chairs the Lord Taverners Charity in the East Midlands. He is also a former board member of The Foxes Trust.

Businessman of the year

Stanmore Ltd's managing director, Raj Manak, won the Businessman of the Year award at the 8th English Asian Business Awards recently, and was also shortlisted into the finals for the outstanding achievement award.

FIS

FINISHES & INTERIORS SECTOR

Building a better fit-out and finishes sector... together.

Our mission is to set members up for success by bringing people together through shared activities, knowledge, events, products and services. We create conditions for all our members to improve performance and win work.

7 REASONS TO JOIN!



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"During a live project, we called on FIS for technical expertise regarding an issue with CE marking. Their response was swift, informed and, above all, resolved the issue. We recommend FIS membership to anyone in the interiors sector."

Tony Johnston, Sound Interiors Ltd



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FIS brings the finishes and interiors community together.

"For any company that actively works within the fit-out sector, I strongly recommend membership of FIS. We have gained from the FIS groups we have associated with, and became nationally recognised as a Gold Winner in the annual Contractors Awards competition."

Julian Sargent, Style Partitions

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PEOPLE**

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DELIVERING SKILLS

FIS is providing the training and skills the sector needs.

"Being part of FIS gives us the back-up we need, and gives our clients confidence in the products we offer."

Tony Regan, Building Additions

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Restaurant Palægade chose this minimalistic x-edge ceiling for a near seamless ceiling appearance and to keep customers in an enjoyable dining atmosphere.

TAKING THE DIN OUT OF DINING

Jenny Brookes, area marketing manager at Rockfon UK, discusses the problems posed by intrusive background noise in hospitality premises and how ceilings can offer a solution.

We all like to partake in café culture and to eat out and socialise. But are the cafés, bars, eateries and clubs we frequent healthy places to be? Increasingly noise is having an impact on both the customers and staff of many food and drink venues.

Cafes and coffee shops can be noisy places thanks to coffee making equipment, glass, crockery, cutlery, music and general chatter. A 2017 survey for the charity Action on Hearing Loss (AoHL) found noise levels of more than 97 decibels in one café, as noisy as standing next to a tractor or in a nightclub.

There is a growing trend for people to spend some of their working day away from the formality of the office or classroom and to work from laptops in their favourite coffee emporium. But how effective are thought processes and productivity in these surroundings? Research by Ravi Mehta of the University of Illinois found that while the moderate levels of noise experienced in some coffee shops can actually help creativity, as soon as noise levels increase above 85 decibels, creativity and the amount of information people can process are negatively impacted.

Sound impacting sales

Unwanted noise can overwhelm the senses and become a distraction. It might even mean diners are less able to taste their food or hear fellow patrons. An additional issue can be misheard orders. Under these circumstances, diners might decide not to return.

Intrusive background noise is a growing issue in restaurants, cafes and pubs. The charity Action on Hearing Loss (AoHL) has revealed that 35% of customers surveyed write online reviews after dining out, and half of these mention high noise levels. An earlier report found that 79% of those surveyed had left a restaurant early, resulting in a loss of revenue for the restaurant, all as a result of excess noise.

More disturbing facts relating to retail premises were aired by sound consultant Julian Treasure on the online forum TED, where influential videos from expert speakers are featured.

"Bad retail soundscapes, which could be improved with acoustic absorption, lead to a 28% decrease in sales with people leaving (shops) faster, or just turning around at the door," said Julian, who is also the author of several respected books on the subject.

Health and hearing protection

For those who work in such establishments, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says the level at which employers must assess the risk to workers' health and provide them with information and training is 80 decibels. It also states 85 decibels (daily or weekly average exposure) employers must provide hearing protection and hearing protection zones.

AoHL chief executive Mark Atkinson said: "These results demonstrate the business case for restaurants putting some real consideration into their acoustics. Everyone loves going out for



Jenny Brookes

For more than a decade Jenny has used her industry knowledge and expertise managing marketing strategy and communications for Rockfon stone wool acoustic ceiling and wall panels in the UK, focussing on specifiers, installers and distributors to promote Rockfon acoustic ceiling and wall panel solutions.

Prior to joining Rockfon, she spent seven years with Letchworth-based Altro, where she was responsible for marketing to flooring installers and distributors as well as flooring and walling products to architects and the healthcare sector

a meal but with an increasing variety of takeaway options and the intrusive background noise levels exacerbated by fashionable hard surfaces, it's no wonder customers are opting to stay in."

To really get to grips with the issue, acoustic ceilings and wall panels are the most effective way of controlling sound and can harmonise with the interior design.

Class A sound absorbency

Senior consultant acoustician, Malachy McAlister, advised on improvements to the acoustics at iconic Dublin landmark café Bewley's, where a smooth, seamless, Class A sound absorbent ceiling is now installed to control reverberation and integrate with the building's period features. He is impressed with how effectively the monolithic ceiling reduced the level of reverberation. "We were able to determine the additional absorption provided by the new ceiling by undertaking acoustic tests before and after its installation. Our measurements show the acoustic ceiling reduced the reverberation time from 1.1 seconds to 0.7 seconds, a 35% reduction in sound reverberation."

Bewley's Grafton Street assistant general manager, Andrew Griffin, noticed a big improvement. "Before the new ceiling, the noise levels could get very high, making it difficult to hear what customers are saying. Now the feel of

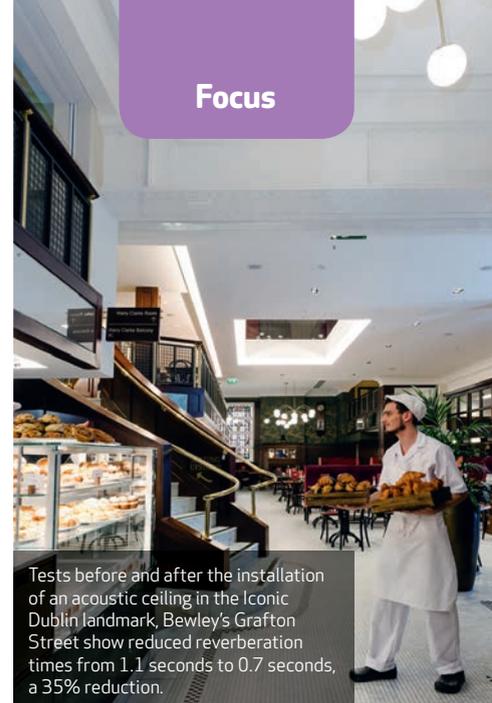
the café has changed, it is much calmer and more relaxed," he said.

The Mikkeller craft beer bar had a problem with unwanted noise. The installation of frameless acoustic ceiling islands solved the issue whilst also providing high light reflection, a visually appealing addition to the bar's minimalistic Scandinavian interior. Ceiling islands offer versatility as they work equally well in modern or historic settings and can be retrofitted.

Versatile acoustic options

If increasing the acoustic performance of the ceiling is not a viable option, or additional sound control is required after ceiling improvements have been made, installing acoustic wall panels is a highly effective way of reducing the impact of noise. Available in a wide range of sizes and colours, they can create striking wall designs either on their own or as part of an overall interior style.

Consulting with an acoustician or a reputable manufacturer of sound absorbent ceilings and wall systems at the beginning of the project will ensure the interior offers a comfortable and enjoyable dining experience for customers who will want to recommend and return to. Those working in such environments are also likely to be better protected against everyday stress noise and the possibility of serious long-term health impacts such as tinnitus and hearing loss.



Tests before and after the installation of an acoustic ceiling in the iconic Dublin landmark, Bewley's Grafton Street show reduced reverberation times from 1.1 seconds to 0.7 seconds, a 35% reduction.

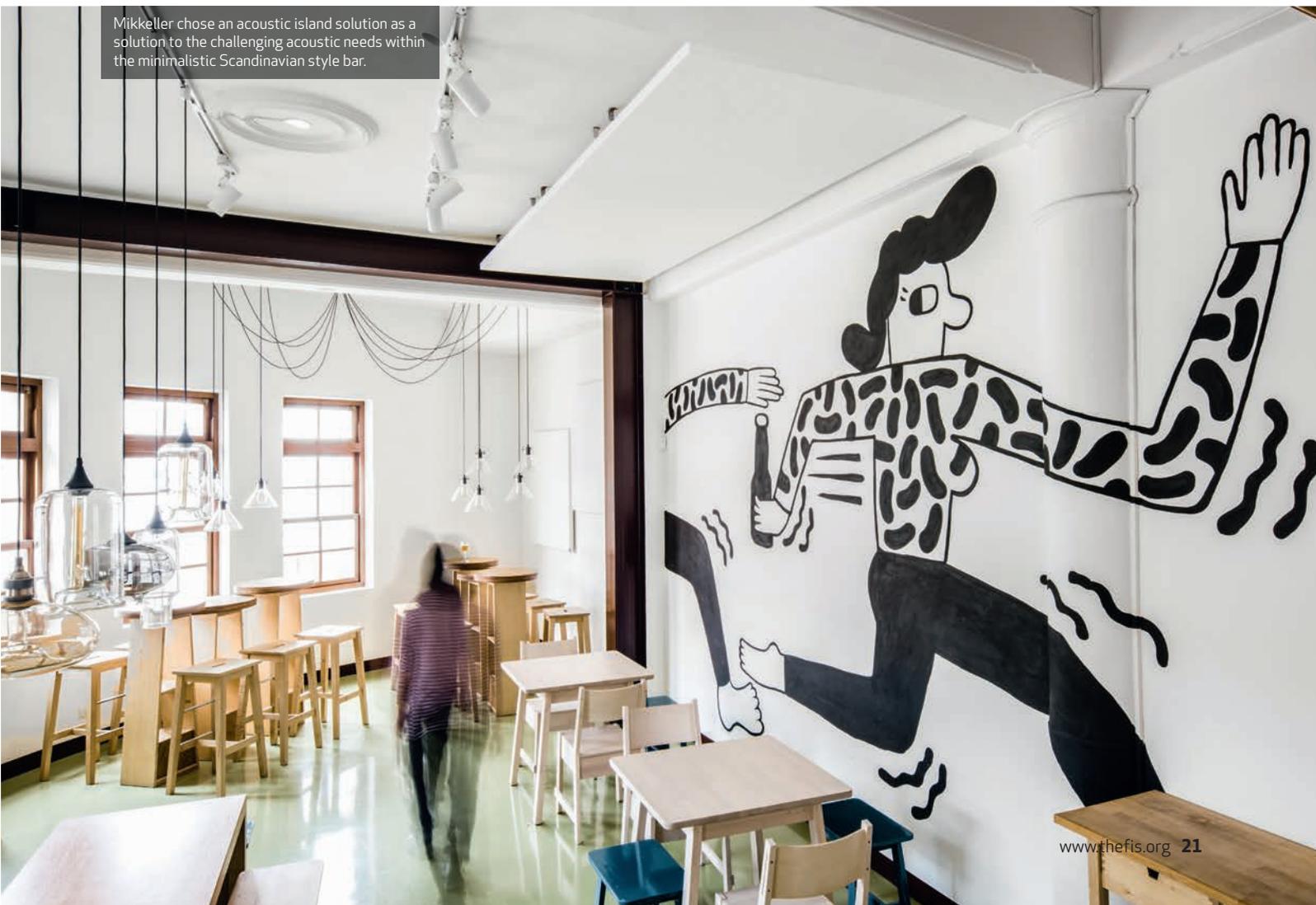


FIND OUT MORE

Indicative reverberation time calculations and preliminary room acoustic analysis can be completed on new build and refurbishment projects incorporating Rockfon solutions. For more details, visit

www.rockfon.co.uk/resources/reverberation-calculation

Mikkeller chose an acoustic island solution as a solution to the challenging acoustic needs within the minimalistic Scandinavian style bar.



TIMBER A NEW BRANCH OF SAS INTERNATIONAL

A leading British manufacturer of high-performance metal ceilings, architectural metalwork and integrated lighting solutions, SAS International expands its product portfolio with the addition of timber ceilings.

With an increasing number of people spending time indoors, it is essential to consider the impact the interiors have on the building user's wellbeing. As research has long shown, exposure to the natural environment can positively impact human health and wellbeing, both physical and psychological. This can be achieved through the choice of material, such as timber.

Timber offers the natural beauty and rich characteristics of wood. A key design influence within on-trend interiors, timber ceilings are gaining traction in the design market. Adding to the ambience of a space, timber also provides design flexibility, acoustic control and meets the rigorous demands of fire safety, making it a functional solution.

To meet such functional and design demands, SAS International has integrated wooden panels within a wide range of SAS systems. Working in collaboration with architects and acoustic engineers, the new range considers the aesthetic and acoustic demands each interior will pose.

SAS750 Timber



SAS500 Timber Baffle

AESTHETICS AND ACOUSTICS

Where health and wellness are now top design priorities, incorporating natural elements – including timber – is thought to increase occupant wellbeing by 15%.

With a vast range of organic and engineered veneers on offer – including American walnut, oak rift cut and greenblade havana – SAS Timber products not only ensure an authentic finish, but can contribute to the design intent of the space.

In addition to this, acoustics is one of the ten key concepts established by the WELL v2 standard. Contributing towards the health and wellness of the building user, SAS Timber products have been designed and tested to provide acoustic support. To provide a high level of sound absorption, the use of perforation or groove patterns on each panel is present in order to achieve optimal acoustic effect.

THE SAS SYSTEMS ON OFFER

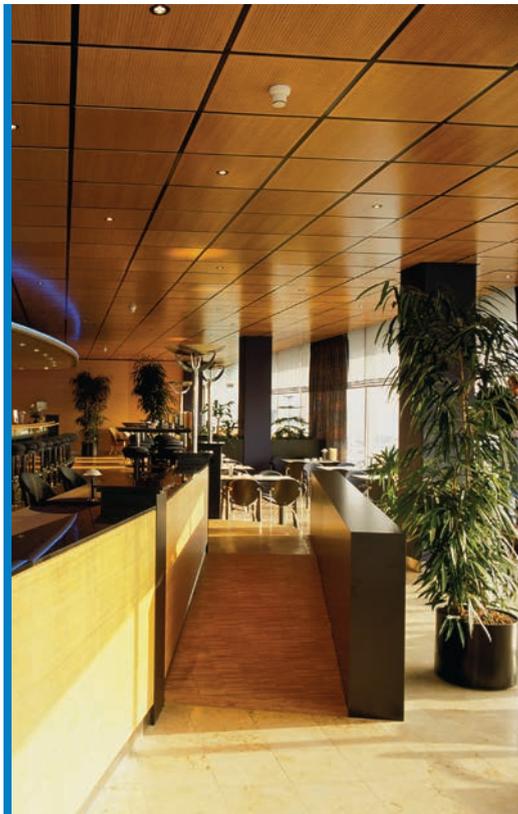
SAS Timber's ceiling systems are parallel to their trusted metal counterparts. SAS130 Timber lay-in panels are ideal for interiors which require easy installation and quick access to the ceiling void, including retail environments and conference centres. Available in a flush (Alugrid) or square edge (Tee Grid) finish, depending on the client's requirements, SAS130 Timber panels assure seamless installation with a professional, uniform finish.

For projects which have a little more creative free rein, SAS200 Timber is a perfect basis for fully bespoke timber panel designs. With SAS200, when it comes to access and service integration, the timber panels can be simply lifted and removed from the ceiling grid. SAS200 also has considerable acoustic properties, with a dense mineral wool pad within each panel for ample sound absorption.

For projects requiring an open-soffit ceiling design, SAS500 Timber baffles are unsurpassed. An alternative to a suspended ceiling system, these baffles absorb sound and prevent reverberation, enabling designers to create beautiful ceilings with excellent acoustic performance.

In spaces which require acoustic control, visual impact and natural cooling, SAS750 Timber is a dynamic system which hits the mark on these vital requirements. As linear profile ceiling, as opposed to a baffle design, clients can benefit from service integration, acoustic performance and high-end aesthetics with the SAS750 system.

An attractive addition to SAS International's portfolio, the new branch of SAS Timber ceiling solutions will assure occupants can experience a piece of the outside world in their indoor environment. With an ability to transform a timber ceiling proposal into a beautiful reality, SAS International's timber range has endless aesthetic, design and acoustic possibilities for any building of any nature.



SAS130 Timber



SAS200 Timber

A NEW ERA OF FIRE SAFETY

Simon Lewis describes what it means to be a 'duty holder'

On the night of 14 June 2017, a devastating fire broke out in the 24-storey Grenfell Tower block of flats in North Kensington, West London. Seventy-two people tragically lost their lives in the fire, more than 70 others were injured and 223 people escaped.

The Government took immediate action and on 15 June 2017 a public inquiry into the fire was announced. The Government also commissioned the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety, led by Dame Judith Hackitt (the independent review) and its Final Report was presented to Parliament in May 2018. Building on the independent review, in June 2019 the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) published its proposals for reform of the building safety regulatory system (the Consultation) including reforms that will "ensure nothing like Grenfell can ever happen again".

In this article, we will focus on Chapter 3 of the consultation which proposes strict accountability on 'duty holders' with clear and defined responsibilities throughout an 'in scope' building's design, construction and occupation.

Part A – Design and construction

The duties included at Part A ensure "building safety is priority" during the design and construction phase. During this phase, the consultation proposes the alignment of duty holder roles with those already identified under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM). To support the development of safer buildings during design and construction, duty holders will acquire both general responsibilities and specific regulatory requirements and will be responsible for demonstrating compliance.

Three specific gateway points during the design and construction phases have been identified and

the intention is that at each of these gateways the duty holder will be required to demonstrate that they are actively managing building safety risks appropriately before being permitted to continue to the next stage of development.

Part B – Duties in occupation

The duties included at Part B focus on continuous assessment of safety risks within buildings as they evolve, undergo refurbishment and naturally degrade. The proposals aim to remove the "overlapping regulatory frameworks" identified in the Independent Review and "facilitate a whole building approach in ensuring the safety of residential buildings and their occupants".

A new safety case accountability regime has been proposed, which would create an evidence-based approach to fire and structural risks not provided for under the current legislative framework. Under the proposals, an accountable person will be required to produce a safety case for approval by a regulator prior to a building safety certificate being issued demonstrating that hazards and risks involved in a building have been identified, how the risks are assessed and controlled and emergency procedures in the event of an incident.

The responsibilities on the accountable person under the safety case regime are continuous and the accountable person will have to evidence how fire and structural risks are being managed on an ongoing basis. During occupation, the safety case will need to be reviewed every five years.

The consultation acknowledges that the safety case requirements will differ between new buildings and existing (occupied) buildings. For new buildings, the information provided during the three gateways will begin to form the "golden thread of building information" intrinsic to the consultation's proposals and will be built on during the safety case regime process. For existing buildings



Simon Lewis

Simon has more than 30 years' experience in the construction industry, specialising in dispute resolution in the infrastructure, energy, PFI/PPP and subsea/offshore sectors for a wide variety of public and private sector clients. He has extensive experience in all forms of dispute resolution. He writes and lectures regularly on construction law issues and has taken a particular interest in the legal issues surrounding the introduction and development of BIM. Simon is regional coordinator for the north-east branch of the Society of Construction Law.



however, the golden thread will begin later during the building safety registration process and the Consultation acknowledges that information on the building itself and the safety systems may be limited, difficult to acquire or simply unavailable. In such cases, the accountable person will need to demonstrate the measures put in place to mitigate against the potentially unknown risks.

Part C - Duties that run throughout a building's life cycle

At the core of the consultation is the concept of a "golden thread of accurate and up-to-date information about the design, construction and ongoing maintenance" of relevant buildings. This, according to the Government, is key to preventing a disaster like Grenfell from occurring again.

The consultation requires the information and data forming the "golden thread" to be stored digitally using a common data environment allowing different parties to work collaboratively on developing and maintaining the information. The Government has also suggested that the information may need to comply with the Building Information Modelling (BIM) standards.

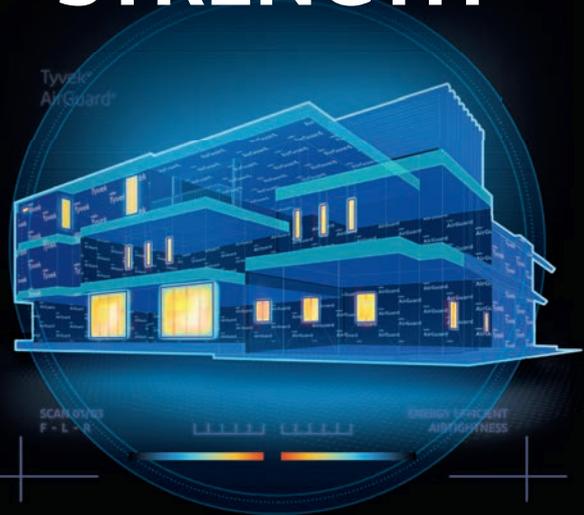
In addition to the "golden thread", mandatory occurrence reporting is also to be introduced, with a legal obligation on the duty holder to establish both internal reporting and reporting of specific occurrences (set out in legislation) to the building safety regulator.

The key to the success of the consultations proposals is ensuring duty holders have the required skill set knowledge and experience to comply with the new regime. The proposals, if implemented, impose very heavy responsibilities on duty holders with criminal sanctions for those who fail to meet expectations. Whilst we cannot know for certain that all of the proposals within the consultation will be implemented, we can be sure that the new regime will be a massive shake-up to the industry as we know it.



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HOW DO WE ASSESS COMPETENCY?

Stephanie Cornwall questions whether vital aspects are being overlooked when determining whether someone is the right person for a job or task.

In recent years the talk in construction has been of a skills shortage, but increasingly the emphasis of this debate is shifting - competency is the watchword. This is in no small part thanks to Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety which identified a lack of competency and recognised way to manage competency as a major failing of the construction supply chain.

In this article we start to look at the difference between skill and competency and the need to develop clear competency frameworks that help businesses in the finishes and interiors sector to manage risks, improve quality and safety and avoid costly errors.

Alan O'Neile, head of communications at the Construction Skills Certification Scheme, said problems can often be down to a genuine misunderstanding of what credentials are held and how this relates to actual competency.

He said: "In the past many construction industry cards schemes, CSCS included, have been promoted as 'competency' card schemes ie possession of a card automatically signifies the cardholder is competent to carry out a given task or job. Furthermore the industry was keen to embrace this concept with a cursory inspection of the card before individuals were allowed to work on site.

"However, we are always keen to point out that holding a CSCS card should not be accepted as proof of the holder's competency. A CSCS card simply confirms the holder's identification, training and qualifications."

Most cards schemes displaying the CSCS logo (there were 35 at the last count) do not currently record certain information that could assist a supervisor or manager in determining an individual's competence, such as physical fitness, work experience and behavioural attributes, yet some organisations still rely on the card as proof of competence.

"Clients often unwittingly reinforce this assumption by requiring their contractors to demonstrate the workforce is fully 'carded'. However, through research we know that, while the workforce may be 100% carded, many of them carry the wrong card for the job they do. Holding the wrong card makes it difficult for contractors to reliably check site workers' qualifications and training," said Alan.



"Only by carrying out a thorough card check (ideally electronically) can the card schemes be viewed as a valuable tool, issued to those working on construction sites on a regular basis and providing information on the cardholder that, in conjunction with any other knowledge about the person such as work experience, in-house training, behaviour and health, assists the supervisor or manager to judge the individual's competence."

CSCS believes the aim of all card schemes should be to expand the information accessed by the card to make these judgements easier for the supervisor or manager. This could include all unaccredited training, such as that given in-house, fitness to work and basic employment history.

Standards form a good foundation

So how should we assess competency and what are the potential pitfalls of not doing this properly?

FIS is starting to look at competence as a combination of factors that are clearly laid out in the SAKE principals (Skills, Attitude, Knowledge, Experience). These basic ingredients of a competency framework take into account the impacts of cognitive/mental skills, emotions/attitudes and psychomotor learning (manual or physical skills).

Skills: The practical application of knowledge learnt through on and/or off-the-job training.

Attitude: The mindset or approach required for competence, across the entire occupation.

Knowledge: The information, technical knowledge, and 'know-how' the individual needs to successfully carry out their duties.

Experience: The enhanced knowledge or skill acquired through practical experience.

Iain McIlwee, CEO of FIS said. "It is vital that we interrogate all of the ingredients of competency if we are to effectively manage risk and this can definitely be done in a more consistent way. Even if we ensure someone does have the right skills card, knowledge of the specific system or circumstance they are working in can be difficult to track and need to be considered in line with experience and the appropriate level of supervision. Attitude is probably the most complex area, but it is intrinsic to the culture we create, so induction and supervision are vital".

The dangers of complacency

The importance of applying the vital ingredients within workforce management has been highlighted by court cases which show how costly it can be to be complacent. For example, in a prosecution brought by Lincoln County Council, the court determined that a fireplace installer could be prosecuted under the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (GPSR) for supplying an unsafe product by virtue of its installation.



FIS has been working with members to address the issues of providing clear digital evidence of compliance and competence through an initiative called Product Process People (PPP). This is a process to evidence compliance by saving copies of test reports, product delivery notes and site images to show correct installation. Together with copies of the operatives' CSCS cards with relevant training recorded in the same file, this will provide current evidence of competency. For more details, visit www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/product-process-people/



Dates for your diary

DIAMOND EVENT WITH THE DARK DESTROYER

Nevill Long celebrated its 60th anniversary and its continued partnership with Armstrong Ceilings with a party cruise on the River Thames in July.

Those who attended met for a champagne reception at the Tower Hotel, London, then enjoyed a barbecue, live music and complimentary bar on The Erasmus as it cruised down the Thames.

MD of Nevill Long, Dave Bonner, said: "It was such an honour to celebrate the 60 year anniversary of Nevill Long with our customers, and our key partner Armstrong Ceilings, cruising down the Thames. The evening was a resounding success with over 80 guests on board representing the ceilings industry from all over the UK. We also had the Dark Destroyer (Shaun Wallace) from The Chase on board quizzing us on all things trivia. Guests said it's the best event yet and we have already got our thinking caps on for the next one."

David Selkirk and Shaun Wallace
(The Dark Destroyer)



04/09/2019

Ceilings Industry working group

Online
10.30-13.30

18/09/2019

SFS working group

Online
10.30-12.00

19/09/2019

FIS Scottish Awards Lunch 2019

InterContinental Edinburgh (The George), 19-21 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PB
Noon

01/10/2019

Digital Construction Working Group:

The Big Debate
ISG office, Aldgate House,
33 Aldgate High Street, London
EC3N 1AG
13.30 - 16.30

05/11/2019

Drylining working group

London
10.30-1.30

06/11/2019

FIS regional meeting - London
Style Showroom (Atrium), London
16.00 - 18.00

07/11/2019

Partition Industry working group

London
10.30-13.00

12/11/2019

Heritage Plastering working group

Saint-Gobain venue
10.30-13.00

12/11/2019

Operable Wall working group

Saint Gobain Multi Comfort Centre,
95 Great Portland St, Marylebone,
London W1W 7NY
14.00-16.30

13/11/2019

SFS working group

SIG, Unit 2, Lyncastle Toad,
Warrington WA4 4SN
10.30-13.30

19/11/2019

FIS Conference - Rethinking Construction

Hilton Hotel, St George's Park,
National Football Centre, Tatenhill,
Burton upon Trent DE13 9RN
09.30 - 16.45

26/11/2019

Ceilings Industry working group

Saint Gobain Multi Comfort Centre,
95 Great Portland St, Marylebone,
London W1W 7NY
10.30-13.30

4/12/2019

FIS regional meeting - Scotland

Construction Scotland Innovation
Centre, Unit 3B, 3 Watt Place,
Hamilton International Technology
Park G72 OAG
16.00 - 18.00

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ARE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS JUST A TICK BOX EXERCISE?

Tim Ladd delves into the background surrounding this specialised area of health and safety and its perceived effectiveness.

Mental health is such a prevalent issue within the workplace. It is estimated that one in four people in the UK suffer from a mental health disorder, resulting in 300,000 lost jobs and 127 million lost work hours.

According to official statistics, 67% of people would talk about their mental ill health to their family, 63% would talk to their friends, 12% would talk to their work colleagues but only 2% would talk to their human resources department. This is why mental health first aid (MHFA) training and mental health first aiders (MHFAiders) are so important in the workplace (a MHFAider is a person who has completed a MHFA training course delivered by an accredited MHFA instructor). Sadly, however, many organisations treat it as a tick box exercise.

Last year's IOSH report caused much debate and has supplied evidence and concerns regarding the effectiveness of MHFAiders in the workplace. The bottom line of that report are the following two statements:

Principal investigator Professor Avril Drummond, from the School of Health Sciences at the University of Nottingham said:

"We found examples of excellent practice in rolling out MHFA training where there were clearly strategies in place to support staff who felt confident in their role. However, we also found examples where staff felt unsupported and where, for example, they had co-workers contacting them outside working hours: there were significant issues around lack of clarity regarding boundaries and potential safety concerns for the trained person."

Head of advice and practice at IOSH Duncan Spencer said: "Appointing staff in a volunteer capacity to support colleagues with mental health problems must be part of a bigger management system including preventative controls to remove or reduce risks."

I have had a lot of experience seeing this first-hand and observing companies rolling out MHFA training with absolutely nothing further in place for the newly appointed first aiders. It is very concerning how many companies are implementing MHFA training but have not considered vital further support and aftercare (not only for the person affected) but for the MHFAider. »



Tim Ladd

Managing Director at Red Umbrella

Tim is the managing director of Red Umbrella, which works with companies large and small, charities, universities, and even premiership football clubs, providing mental health first aid training, line manager awareness training, bespoke workshops, and 'build your own' mental health specific EAPs. It tailors for small companies that don't have access to any kind of EAP and is the only provider that includes help and advice on mental health first aider selection, internal promotion, 24/7 support a mentoring program and immediate access to therapists free of charge to all delegates on any of its training.



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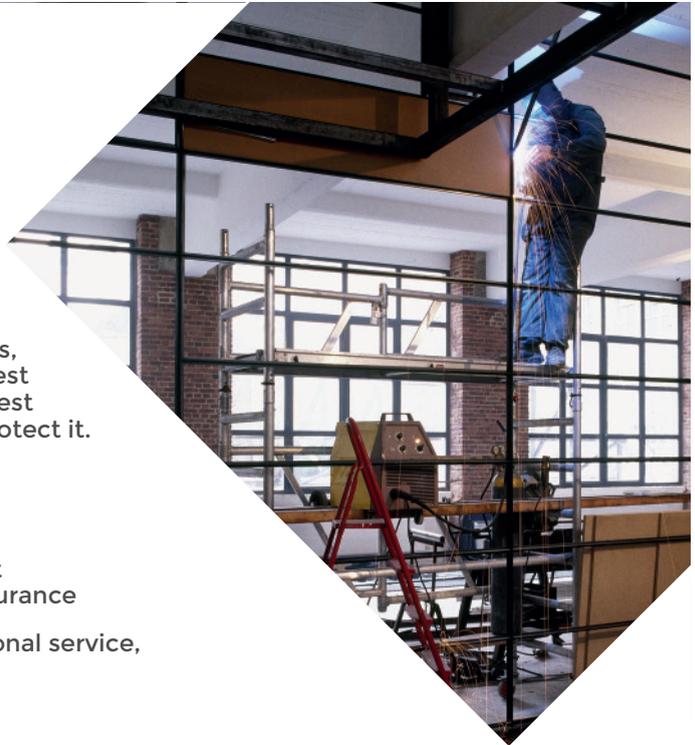
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An MHFAider is a volunteer. They are not qualified therapists but play a vital role on the front line and are often the first to hear a colleague voice any issues that deeply affect them. For example, not long ago a colleague told an MHFAider that not only was he considering bankruptcy (no one expected that) but that he had just found out a close family member had been given a few months to live. This is very harrowing information for the MHFAider to hear from a colleague/friend, which is why support is so important.

For MHFA training to be effective long term, companies need to create their own Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) that is specific to mental health. Mental health issues are too individualistic to be covered by general EAPs or be limited to just a few sessions with a therapist. In order for this to work, companies need to have immediate access to advice and help and liaison services between management and staff and HR - all conducted in an anonymous environment for the staff.

Even though it shouldn't be an issue, return on investment (ROI) is always the stumbling block for these types of services, but all our feedback shows a long term saving and an immediate positive impact for staff and management - and even the saving of lives.

Let's not forget why this training is so important, similarly let's not just go through the motions and get the MHFA training done just to tick a box. It's great to post happy pictures and publicise the fact you have put training in place that prioritises your employees' well-being, but please ensure there is specific support in place for the MHFAiders. What's more, this doesn't need to cost anything or impact budgets.

Your questions answered:

Does it matter which people are selected to go on this training?

Based on lots of feedback, it's really important to make sure the correct people are selected for the mental health first aider role. For example: Are they known as the office gossip? Do they have time to spend with colleagues? (If someone's role is to answer the phone every five minutes, they won't be able to listen to a colleague's issues properly).

Should it be the HR department, should it be line managers, or does it not matter as long as there are some people in the workforce that are trained?

It is critical that all line managers and senior management are involved, some are fully trained and all have awareness training.

Is this for the newly trained first aiders or wider employees?

Free services are provided to all training delegates as they will need support in their MHFAider role. For all employees, we have our mental health specific EAP known as rEAP.

What other advantages are there to this training?

The training really provides a great team bonding experience and is proving to be vital training for the ongoing productivity of departments. What seemed to be a tick box exercise has in many cases proven to be the best small investment of companies. There is a reason why so many companies are aiming to have at least 15% of their workforce trained.



FIND OUT MORE

Tim will be holding a breakout session on the mental health challenge in construction at our forthcoming FIS Conference 2019 - Rethinking Construction. The event takes place at St Georges Park, Burton upon Trent on 19 November. For more details visit www.thefis.org/events/fis-conference-rethinking-construction. *Red Umbrella is offering FIS members a 15% discount on its half day, one day, and two day training courses for Mental health First Aid.* For more information on mental health training visit www.red-umbrella.co.uk

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