



Timber Trade Federation  
growing the use of wood

# JOINED-UP BUSINESS

The timber supply chain magazine  
for the UK Joinery sector

Issue 4 Summer 2021

TIMBER YOU  
CAN TRUST  
#TrustedTimber





# COLLABORATE TO COMMUNICATE

## David Hopkins, Chief Executive of the Timber Trade Federation, says it's good to talk.



Wood shortages have characterised the first half of 2021 and the supply situation is set to remain tight for the rest of the year across all product categories, from softwoods to hardwoods and panel products. Keeping in touch with each other - suppliers, manufacturers and fit-out contractors - at least enables us all to understand the situation and communicate the reasons to customers.

To this end the TTF published a Market Statement on softwood shortages in mid-spring: we aim to replicate this pattern across other product categories through the rest of the year, giving everyone more information with which to plan ahead for their businesses. A round-up of the supply situation can be found on the back page of this issue.

Collaborating across the supply chain is also important, and we are pleased to welcome market comment from the NAS in this issue of Joined Up Business. Collaborating internationally serves us all by enabling sustainable

supply chains and bringing us a wider choice of materials to work with, as demonstrated in our feature on alternative species of sustainable hardwoods from Africa.

Above all, collaborating and communicating about the safety of our products is also key to maintaining a central role for wood, and for the high level of craft skills represented in today's joinery sector. TTF has made a positive move to become a Registered Signatory to the Building a Safer Future Charter, a step which we are encouraging all those around us also to explore.

## BUILDING A SAFER FUTURE



The Timber Trade Federation has become a registered signatory to the Building a Safer Future Charter. Companies and organisations are encouraged to sign the Charter, to demonstrate their commitment to putting people's safety first when it comes to the design of buildings and the elements which go into them. The BSF Charter is a

proactive response to Dame Judith Hackitt's Building a Safer Future Review in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and its driving force is to encourage cross-industry collaboration to change the culture around building safety. Find out more and join us as a Registered Signatory at [buildingasaferfuture.org.uk](http://buildingasaferfuture.org.uk).

# JOINERY NEWS ROUND-UP

Bringing you the latest from around the sector

## And breathe...

In June, the National Association of Shopfitters & Interior Contractors (NAS) ran a campaign raising awareness of occupational respiratory health in the shopfitting/fit-out and broader construction sector. The online campaign offered members related training courses incorporating wood Dust Control, UKATA Asbestos Awareness, Face Fit (Fit2Fit) RPE, and Silica Awareness. The week was supported by industry sponsorship. Find out more via the NAS Website: [www.shopfitters.org/respiratory-health](http://www.shopfitters.org/respiratory-health)



## Virtually extended

Hanson Plywood is continuing with the development of its virtual showroom with phase three launching this summer. Included in the new release is a new Professional & Technical Zone, designed to help anyone involved in specifying Hanson's products to find the correct information. Hanson changes the product focus on the entrance hall 'tv' screen in the virtual showroom each month, allowing it to showcase a range of products, for example its Panguaneta Poplar Plywood. Visit the newly-extended virtual showroom via: [hanson-plywood.co.uk](http://hanson-plywood.co.uk)

## Wood and Wellbeing

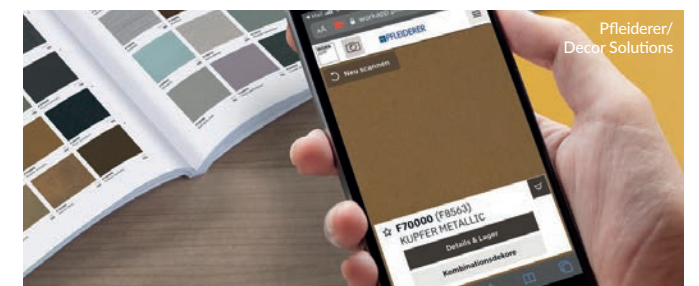
Looking for something to help your marketing? We all instinctively know that wood is good for us

and good for the planet, but a new research whitepaper from softwood producers Stora Enso can prove it. Featuring a selection of recent research into the beneficial effects of wood and natural materials on personal wellbeing and mental health, Stora's new report entitled 'Ten Reasons why wooden buildings are good for you' can be downloaded free by registering here: [info.storaenso.com/wood-house-effect](http://info.storaenso.com/wood-house-effect)



## Larger Accoya® sections

Laminated Accoya® available from International Timber is now being offered in new, larger sections, including in sizes suitable for posts and beams, in addition to the sash, casement and window/door framing components already offered. Across the full range, lengths on each laminated Accoya component are produced to order, and other dimensions are now extended as follows: for window manufacture, from 63mm x 75mm to 110mm x 85mm; for door production: from 48mm x 125mm to 63mm x 200mm; for beams: from 100mm x 300mm to 300mm x 300mm; and for posts: from 100mm x 100mm to 300mm x 300mm. International Timber undertakes the laminating of Accoya wood here in the UK, shortening the supply chain for the joinery sector and making the most of every piece of Accoya: a welcome thought in times of supply shortage on traditional timbers.



## Design online

Decor Solutions, suppliers of German-made Pfeleiderer wood-based panels and decorative surfaces, are introducing the interiors sector to Pfeleiderer's new suite of digital tools. Completely free to use via Pfeleiderer's website, the tools include a Virtual Room Designer, a 'Mood board' facility allowing users to upload a photo and have products recommended to fit the design theme, a product finder, and access to Pfeleiderer's BIM data, which is downloadable for use in CAD/CAM design software. For details visit: [www.decor-melamine.co.uk/news](http://www.decor-melamine.co.uk/news)



# TAILORED TO FIT

## FIT-OUT

We take a look at the fit-out and interior finishes sector and its positive prospects in a changing economy

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR FIT-OUT?

We hear from the revitalised NAS (National Association of Shopfitters & Interior Contractors) about the past year's pandemic problems and their hopes for the future.

### £10 billion sector

The fit-out and interiors sector has had mixed experiences throughout the pandemic but is looking forward to a brighter future, according to James Filus, Director of NAS (the National Association of Shopfitters & Interior Contractors), which celebrated its centenary in 2019. Part of a £10 billion sector, the NAS has refocused around a new mission and vision, reigniting interest in training and development, and engaging with stakeholders across the construction sector.

"From speaking to our members, the impact of the pandemic has been varied," director James Filus says. "Some businesses have been very quiet, others have been stretched; but a large proportion of them have looked outside their traditional client-base in response to the business circumstances during the past year. There's been a rise in businesses taking up opportunities in the high-end residential market. We're also aware of a spike in work on building use conversions, and work on outdoor establishments, as a result of the indoor COVID restrictions."



### Brighter future

What is the future looking like for NAS members? "Overall, the future is looking positive," James Filus continues. "Members have reported that new opportunities are coming through and this is something we've also noticed, as our website regularly features new business for our members. We remain 100% committed to promoting, supporting, and developing the sector, developing the NAS as a hub to connect to shopfitters, fit-out and interior contractors to clients." Visit the NAS website at: [www.shopfitters.org](http://www.shopfitters.org).

### Market insight

To match the optimism of the NAS, industry analysts Glenigan, in their May construction forecast, said the project development pipeline is well ahead of 2019, with construction recovery momentum continuing to gather. Project starts in all categories were up on pandemic-hit 2020 with office starts in the three months to end of April 2021 being up 45% on the preceding three months. Small office refurbishments are said to be driving activity in the office fit-out sector, a point also made by other industry analysts.

In its mid-spring forecast, the Construction Products Association also saw positive signs, though tempered with some caution, as its Economics Director, Dr Noble Francis, said: "Whilst outlook is largely positive, the recovery in commercial – the third-largest construction sector – is expected to be muted given a lack of major investment in new projects, particularly in Central London. Questions remain over future demand for commercial space, particularly in offices and retail, which may be converted into residential or warehousing and logistics if homeworking and online spending persists in the long-term."



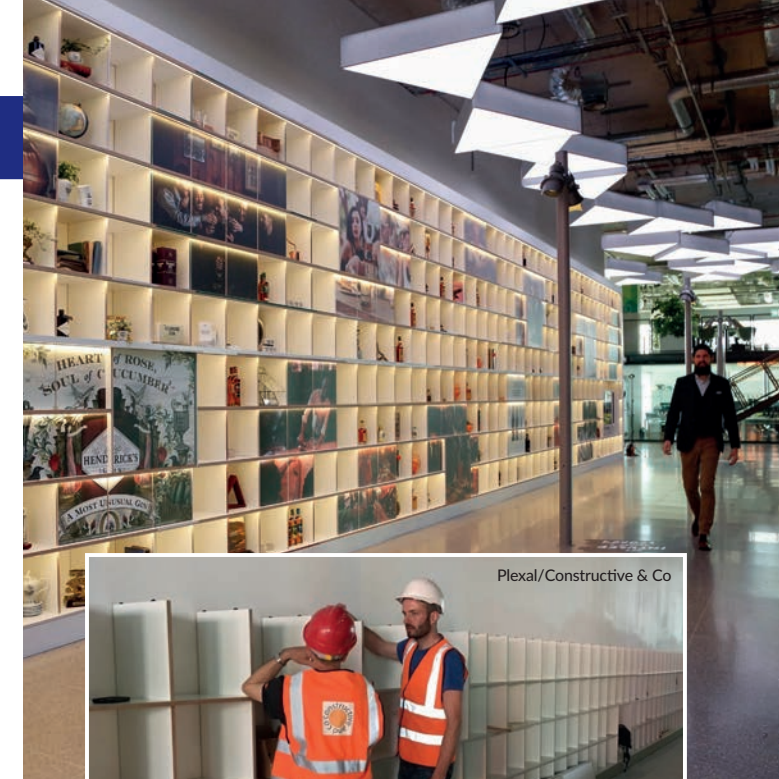
## ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

Wood is the medium of the moment for interiors. We look at variations on a fit-out theme using two every-day product categories to create attractive spaces.

### About face

Birch plywood may seem a ubiquitous product but in today's cost-conscious environment, its availability in numerous formats makes it suitable for a range of joinery and fit-out applications, from retail and restaurants to kitchen cabinetry carcassing and furniture.

"Pre-finished birch plywood is the go-to material for fit-out contractors and joinery manufacturers working to a tight time-scale," says Nicola Hollington, Director at the UK's leading suppliers, DHH Timber. "Pre-finishing takes many of forms, all of which can speed up installation or manufacturing. The pre-lacquered format is ready to use or the grey primed is ready for a top coat of paint. Smooth phenolic film-faced versions are weather and water-resistant so can be used in areas of high humidity; they also save on processes such as painting and finishing. We also offer Riga Mel, which has white Melamine faces on both sides, offering installation advantages to shopfitters."



Sanding exposed edges of Birch plywood variants complements the look of many modern interiors and saves on installing edging strips. Hand-holes can be CNC cut in opening units such as cupboards and drawers, instead of installing time-consuming handles or knobs, giving a more sleek, contemporary finish. Pre-finished Birch plywood surfaces, including phenolic film-coated faces can also be easily cleaned for hygiene purposes. "With larger panel sizes available, there can also be less waste in commercial work," DHH's Nicola Hollington adds.

### OSB Highway

One of the fashionable 'looks' in interior-fit out at the moment is 'industrial', especially for urban buildings. Interior design company Modus specified SMARTPLY MAX exposed OSB to create a new aesthetic for design-driven beauty company SLG's working space in Studio 19 at The Brewery Quarter in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Used for floors and seating, and also to create an 'urban vibe', Modus designed an OSB 'highway' through Studio 19 as the main circulation route, connecting the space from east to west.

The OSB was left 'raw' by design in most areas, apart from a small addition of clear sealant, or painted black to make a statement in certain areas. The flooring was screwed down directly onto fixed raised floor tiles. One of the benefits of using SMARTPLY MAX for the floors was that it allowed an expansion gap, part of the base build floor, to be bridged seamlessly.

Working with SMARTPLY MAX facilitated a versatile, cost effective and environmentally friendly design solution. SMARTPLY MAX is also available in a flame-retardant format: SMARTPLY MAX FR B.





# EXPLORING AFRICA

## AFRICAN HARDWOODS

British attitudes to using African hardwoods are still partly coloured by environmental debates of the past, before sustainability certification systems were in place. Their use is also limited by an approach which favours a few, familiar species names over and above practicalities such as durability and suitability for use.

We explore today's African hardwood products for the joinery sector, already reaping business benefits for joinery producers across Europe.

## SATISFYING DEMANDS

Swiss-based company Interholco specialises in African tropical hardwoods, which reach Britain through its exclusive distributor, Danzer UK. Interholco has a long history of developing sustainable and certified supply chains, particularly from the region towards the centre of Africa which includes the Congo basin. "There are potentially hundreds of sustainable African timbers which could be useful, if only the market could be persuaded to try new species," says Interholco's Vice-President of Sales & Production, Christophe Janssen.

With global timber demand reaching an all-time high, and supply chains into the UK suffering numerous pressures, it could be useful to explore different, readily-available, fit-for-purpose African species, especially those which are able to satisfy UK manufacturers' due diligence demands on legal and sustainable sourcing. "Sapele, Iroko and Sipo suffer from the same supply pressures as Oak," continues Christophe Janssen. "They are the three most familiar names to many buyers, so people simply stick to them. This puts stress on the supply chain and, as everyone has found with Oak, sends prices spiralling," he adds.



## Updating knowledge

With the UK trade's knowledge of global timber species declining, one of the more immediate hurdles for some users to overcome is nomenclature. One person's Sipo is another person's Utile – and that is only one example. A good place to start improving your knowledge is with the 'User Guide to Eco-Certified African Timber', produced by the International Tropical Timber Technical Association (ATIBT [www.atibt.org](http://www.atibt.org)), which can be downloaded as a PDF from their website.

"It's about choosing the right timber for the right job," says Interholco's Christophe Janssen. "With sustainably-produced African hardwoods you can find natural options which offer great durability without any modification. Why purchase a modified wood when a natural one will do the job?" Interholco's range of species is considerable.



## Species on trial

"Recently we have sent trial quantities of Bosse, Tali, Azobe (Ekki) and Kosipo to the UK: some of these species are already being used in window and door production by joinery firms in France, Holland and Belgium. Bosse is good for window components. It's a light-coloured timber, easy to sand and finish, and available as finger-jointed and laminated scantlings.

"Azobe is good for marine (salt-water) and freshwater work, including marinas and lock gates on canals and rivers. Tali is used for timber decking and outdoor purposes, as it has a very long life in use. Kosipo is supplied in many forms, from logs to boules to finger-jointed components and has better durability than Sapele, if no sapwood is present. Kosipo and Bosse are interchangeable with Sapele in many cases. Durability is a key consideration in joinery work: laminated Kosipo is more durable than laminated softwood," Christophe Janssen relates.



## Providing reassurance

Some African sawmills are now producing more semi-finished products, such as finger-jointed timber and laminated scantlings, for the joinery sector. "Like all wood users, joinery producers need to be reassured about legal harvesting, sustainable production and social value issues. The material we produce from the Republic of Congo is 100% FSC certified, for example. PEFC certification (locally called PAFC – Pan-African Forest Certification) will also be available from the Republic of Congo soon.

"Interholco can also demonstrate social and environmental value. Harvesting responsibly the Ngombe forest, we work closely with Odzala Kokoua and Ntokou Pikounda National Parks, safeguarding a forest area roughly the size of Belgium. This allows us to protect habitats for about 70,000 gorillas and 4,000 elephants. Providing sustainable timber also means providing a sustainable livelihood for more than 16,000 local people. If they receive a return on their efforts they value their forest resources even more, and are keen to sustain them for the future," he affirms. "The best way to keep forest cover in place is thus to try using a diversity of African species from legal and sustainable sources, not simply to continue using a limited palette."



## Connecting the market

African hardwoods, including Ekki (Azobe), Idigbo (Framire), Opepe (Bilinga), Wawa (Ayous), as well as the familiar Sapele, Iroko and Sipo (Utile), reach the UK through timber importing members of the Timber Trade Federation, all of whom adhere to strict due diligence requirements which are independently monitored. They therefore fulfil joinery companies' needs for 'timber you can trust'.





# MARKET UPDATE

**Timber and wood product shortages have been a key feature of the first half of 2021, and the situation will remain problematic for the rest of the year. Difficulties obtaining haulage within the UK since Brexit, and container costs in shipping, are also still creating problems.**

The TTF advises joiners, shopfitters, fit-out contractors and manufacturers to keep in contact regularly with suppliers and to plan their needs ahead.

## SOFTWOODS

Exceptionally high global demand for softwood for domestic repair, maintenance and improvements, which started with pandemic lockdowns across the globe, is continuing. Customers with forward purchasing strategies are continuing to receive their allocations but there is no excess stock available in the UK. The supply situation is set to get tighter in Q3 and Q4 this year. Timber suppliers are doing their best to service customers but the level of demand is currently higher than can be swiftly gratified by existing production facilities and available input supplies across the UK and Europe.



## SHEET MATERIALS

Supplies of all panel products including particleboard, and especially flooring grade particleboard, are very much under pressure. Most UK manufacturers are still working on customer allocations, and the same applies internationally. Significant demand is also being experienced for products such as Melamine-faced panels, particularly in MDF, with high demand for use in domestic shelving. At the Wood Based Panels International conference, delegates were told that the pandemic had increased people's focus on investing in their homes. While this has grown demand significantly it also means there is no likelihood of the availability situation changing any time soon. Manufacturers across the sheet materials sector are working hard to keep up with orders.

## HARDWOODS

Hardwoods are seeing increasing shortages across all categories. Both European and American hardwoods are in very strong demand across the world. Hardwood buyers are increasingly turning to African species to fill supply gaps, with supplies of species such as Sapele, Sipo and Iroko now particularly difficult. Rising costs for shipping containers, the legacy of the pandemic, are still with us, adding to pricing pressures. Buyers of South East Asian timbers such as Meranti and Keruing are already purchasing on forward allocations; Bangkirai for decking is also in very short supply. The growth in global demand, increased costs and thus upward price trends are likely to continue in the medium term.



Download reports, resources, and timber species guides from around the world in the joinery section of our website at: [ttf.co.uk/joiners/joiners-resources/](https://ttf.co.uk/joiners/joiners-resources/)