

January/February 2016

THE HARDWARE JOURNAL

The Official Magazine of Hardware Association Ireland

NEXT GOVERNMENT TAKE NOTE

HAI President urges
action on rural decline

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A message from the CEO

I'd like to welcome you to our redesigned *Hardware Journal* and to the first edition of 2016. During 2015, we gradually introduced more focused content to the magazine to broadly reflect the four pillars of the strategic plan that we adopted for the Association 12 months ago – Representation, Education, Market Intelligence and Networking – alongside the latest news, member profiles and commercial features. The ongoing evolution in the quality of content, enhancing its practical relevance to HAI members in the day-to-day running of their businesses, demanded a new style and layout for the publication also.

The *Hardware Journal*'s new look seeks to realign the balance of quality content and stylish presentation in an organised manner to add value to the publication. We hope you like the results. As well as being the official magazine of Hardware Association Ireland and our main communication tool, the magazine reaches well beyond our current membership; in fact it gets distributed to owner-managers, senior buyers and key decision-makers across the entire sector in Ireland and beyond. If you would like your own copy, please email HAI at info@hardwareassociation.ie and you will be sent the next edition free of charge.

Crucially, our re-design aims to emphasise to readers that *The Hardware Journal* is the official magazine of the Association. We do not import our content from other broader representative organisations. We are sector-specific and our content is home grown. We also work in partnership with selected specialist organisations to bring you best practice and expert advice.

Alongside this, we have asked our members what improvements they'd like to see in the magazine and the results of our member satisfaction survey in September last year saw two clear areas that could be incorporated: one, global trends and developments in retail, merchandising and manufacturing; and two, interviews with industry leaders and innovators from home and abroad. With a close-knit team working on the magazine, together with our publishers, IFP Media, we continue to strive to publish content that is relevant, timely and valuable. We have set a standard for ourselves to provide the best publication possible for our members, and, as our magazine continues to develop, we would greatly welcome your comments.

Annemarie Harte
Chief Executive Officer – HAI



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DWELLING UNITS APPROVED UP 24.2%, Q3 2015

In the third quarter of 2015, planning permissions were granted for 2,662 dwelling units, compared with 2,144 units for the same period in 2014, an increase of 24.2%.

Of the total permissions for dwelling units granted in the third quarter, 2,345 were houses and 317 were apartments (1,783 houses and 361 apartments in 2014). This represents an increase of 31.5% in the number of houses and a decrease in number of apartment

units by 12% compared to the same quarter in 2014. One-off houses accounted for 40.5% (950) of all new houses granted planning permission in this quarter.

Total floor area planned was 1,306,000m². Of this, 37.4% was for new dwellings, 40.2% for other new constructions and 22.4% for extensions. The total floor areas planned increased by 34.1% in comparison with the same quarter in 2014 (974,000m² in Q3, 2014).

A comparison of planning permissions granted for the first three quarters of 2015 and 2014 (floor area, 000m²).

Region & County	2014 1st. 3 Qtrs				2015 1st. 3 Qtrs				& + -	
	New Construction		Extension	Total	New Construction		Extension	Total		
	Dwell	Other			Dwell	Other				
Dublin	308	231	113	653	559	243	154	955	46	
Dublin City	88	32	39	159	173	159	57	60	289	
DL/Rathdown	80	55	20	157	68	3	32	104	-34	
Fingal	106	50	23	179	179	144	36	359	101	
South Dublin	37	93	30	157	139	39	25	203	29	
Border	94	77	85	256	151	158	73	382	49	
Cavan	10	16	17	43	21	35	19	75	74	
Donegal	29	13	19	64	43	29	23	94	47	
Leitrim	1	0	4	5	6	0	3	9	80	
Louth	19	6	26	51	36	3	15	55	8	
Monaghan	23	33	9	65	35	84	10	128	97	
Sligo	12	6	10	28	9	8	6	23	-18	
Mid East	106	116	48	270	221	89	105	415	54	
Kildare	28	8	16	52	65	18	37	120	131	
Meath	52	35	21	109	97	46	53	197	81	
Wicklow	26	74	10	109	59	25	14	97	-11	
Midlands	44	40	33	117	74	34	38	146	25	
Laois	10	11	6	27	23	6	13	41	52	
Longford	4	3	12	18	9	3	11	23	28	
Offaly	17	15	7	40	14	5	5	24	-40	
Westmeath	13	12	8	32	29	20	8	57	78	
Mid West	76	63	39	178	81	70	86	237	33	
Clare	24	16	11	47	36	30	26	91	94	
Limerick City	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	-100	
Limerick	34	35	12	81	33	22	47	102	26	
Tipperary North	16	12	14	42	12	20	12	42	0	
South East	109	126	98	332	130	198	93	420	27	
Carlow	9	16	7	32	21	26	6	52	63	
Kilkenny	23	20	21	66	23	33	19	76	15	
Tipperary South	14	27	9	50	13	30	19	63	26	
Waterford City	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Waterford	16	27	21	64	21	51	28	100	56	
Wexford	48	34	39	121	52	55	22	130	7	
South West	151	140	106	397	197	194	117	507	28	
Cork City	5	26	11	42	13	0	16	29	-31	
Cork	107	97	74	278	135	159	76	369	33	
Kerry	39	17	23	78	51	33	26	110	41	
West	111	56	60	227	106	61	52	221	-3	
Galway City	8	9	4	21	12	17	4	33	57	
Galway	53	17	19	88	57	35	23	116	32	
Mayo	32	12	29	73	27	9	16	52	-29	
Roscommon	19	19	7	45	11	0	7	20	-55	
TOTAL	998	850	582	2,430	1,519	1,046	717	3,282	35	

Source: CSO. With thanks to Cliona Kelly, legal.



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Building And Construction Trends

The total number of permissions granted for new buildings for commercial or industrial use has decreased by 1% on the same period from last year. The floor area planned however, has increased by 14%.

Buildings for Commercial & Industrial Use (Jan-Sep)						
9 months	No. of Permissions			Floor Area Planned (000 sq.m)		
	2014	2015	Change	2014	2015	Change
New Construction	248	245	-1%	354	402	14%
Extension & Alteration	939	961	2%	149	208	40%
Total	1,187	1,206	2%	503	610	21%

During the first nine months of 2015, the total number of permissions for new construction and extension/alteration to buildings for health, educational and social use was down 9% on 2014. However, total floor area planned was up on last year by 18%.

Health, Education & Social Buildings (Jan-Sep)						
9 months	No. of Permissions			Floor Area Planned (000 sq.m)		
	2014	2015	Change	2014	2015	Change
New Construction	137	165	20%	214	234	9%
Extension & Alteration	797	686	-14%	143	188	31%
Total	934	851	-9%	357	422	18%

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GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS ACT

Hardware Association Ireland welcomes the appointment of the Construction Contracts Adjudication Panel as a step forward in the implementation of The Construction Contracts Act 2013. On the 15th January, 2016, the *Iris Oifigiúil*, the Irish Government's official publication, published the details of its panel of adjudicators. The publication states: "In exercise of the powers conferred on the Minister of State for Business and Employment by the Construction Contracts Act, 2013, the Minister of State for Business and Employment has appointed the following persons as members of the Construction Contracts Adjudication Panel, established under Section 8 of the Construction Contracts Act, 2013. These appointments are for the period commencing on the 8th December, 2015 and ending on the 7th December, 2020. Appointments to Construction Contracts Adjudication Panel: Mr. Timothy Bouchier-Hayes, Mr. Ciaran Fahy, Mr. Bernard Gogarty,

Mr. James O'Donoghue, Mr. Conor Kelly, Mr. James Bridgeman, Mr. Gerard O'Sullivan, Mr. Joe Behan, Mr. John Redmond, Mr. Matthew Molloy, Dr. John Derek Ross, Mr. John Lyden, Mr. Tony Reddy, Mr. John Thomas Gibbons, Mr. Toal Ó Muiré, Mr. Anthony Bingham, Mr. Jonathan Cope, Mr. Kevin Brady, Mr. David O'Leary, Mr. Gerard Monaghan, Mr. James Golden, Mr. Raymond Nash, Mr. Conor Hogan, Mr. John Riches, Mr. Len Bunton, Mr. John Costello, Mr.

Nigel Davies, Mr. Simon McKenny, Mr. Niall Lawless, Mr. Niall Meagher." As part of Hardware Association Ireland's Budget Submission 2016 we called on Government to deliver the Construction Contracts Act 2013 without delay. The non-payment of fees to contractors not only jeopardises the future of contractors but also the jobs they provide and the many indirect impacts further down the supply chain, including on many HAI members.

NEW PROFESSIONAL DECORATOR APP

Tesa, known for its professional masking tapes, has developed a unique app for industry professionals. In line with Tesa's philosophy, the new Professional Decorator app has been designed to provide a quick and easy tool to identify 'the right product for the job' and is available to download free of charge from the App Store and Google Play.

With the variety of design options and substrates continually evolving, the app identifies solutions at the tap of a screen, providing the masking tape recommendations to avoid problems such as tape residue, uneven paint edges and damaged wallpaper.

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Dermot Foster, Managing Director - EMEA, Modern Marketing Concepts.



Thomas Hackett, Director, Client Engagement, Modern Marketing Concepts.

MODERN MARKETING CONCEPTS CONNECTS YOU TO THE CONTRACTOR

Selling and communicating directly with contractors, both large and small, is a critical challenge for builders merchants and distributors or manufacturers of building products. Modern Marketing Concepts (MMC) is a US company that has a 28-year track record in connecting directly with the contractor community.

According to a spokesperson for MMC: "If you are interested in optimising and increasing your sales, while lowering the overall cost of sales, then MMC can provide real options through our Channel Reach programme which can deliver more sales tools directly to the building site and contractor in one day than your entire field sales team can in one year."

MMC has now set up its European office in Sandyford, Dublin to assist Irish companies to deliver their sales messages directly to thousands of contractors directly nationwide.



Laydex is now the Irish distributor for National Gypsum USA Ltd.

LAYDEX TO DISTRIBUTE NATIONAL GYPSUM US

Laydex has announced its appointment as Irish distributor for National Gypsum USA Ltd. National Gypsum is one of the largest gypsum board producers in the world and Laydex have partnered with them to market and sell their extensive range of interior finishing products under the ProForm brand. The primary products from within this range are ProForm Easy Finish Joint Compound, ProForm Multi-Use Joint Compound and ProForm All Purpose Joint Compound.

Gerry Callan, Laydex Sales Director says "National Gypsum are also the manufacturers of PermaBase® BRAND Cement Board which Laydex are the exclusive distributors of and the addition of the ProForm® range of Jointing Compounds allows our customer to source compatible products from the same manufacturer and supplier."



ON YOUR BIKE WITH BOSTIK

Bostik recently ran a national competition to highlight its sponsorship of the Tour de France 2015. Bostik's 'Win a Bike' competition was hugely successful in the trade, with numerous winners nationwide. Pictured left: Conor O'Connor, Bostik Territory Manager presented the Bostik bike to Pat Sullivan from MD O'Shea Killarney, who accepted the prize on behalf of the winner, Siobhan Wharton.

THE MIRA ELITE QT QUIETLY POWERFUL

Mira have launched an advanced, pumped electric shower that's designed exclusively for Ireland: the Mira Elite QT. It's a powerful and quiet addition to the Mira collection, with new and innovative technologies that ensure it always performs at the highest standards.

70% quieter

The Mira Elite QT is amazingly quiet. It's 70% quieter* than any other pumped electric shower. What's more, it never loses any power, making it the perfect solution for any low pressure water system.

Assassible filter

The shower features Mira Clean-It™ technology. Created specifically for Ireland's water supply, this new filter achieves a consistently clean flow. And it's designed to be accessible, which makes it easy to clean and helps maintain shower performance.

Longer life

The Mira Elite QT also features Mira Cleanse™ technology that helps reduce lime scale by up to 80%. Lime scale affects many homes in Ireland and across Ireland, but Mira Cleanse™ technology actively helps to reduce this build-up. This guarantees a better performance and longer lasting shower.



Contemporary and practical

In contemporary look to any modern bathroom, with chrome detailing that complements other Mira products. Helpfully, the new Mira Elite QT can also be 'topped and tailed' with other products from the range. It's being fitted with a shower tray and panel unit or can go straight onto a wall and electronic shower screen.

To have the Mira Elite QT difference for yourself, visit [mira.ie](http://www.mira.ie) or call 01-8700000.

mira
shower



Joe Doyle, Brett Martin's Director of Plumbing and Drainage, hands over the keys of the Homevalue van to Cathal Daly from Co Wicklow.

BRETT MARTIN SPONSORS HOMEVALUE VAN COMPETITION

Brett Martin Plumbing & Drainage was one of the sponsors of Homevalue's van competition, which saw one lucky Homevalue customer drive off in a brand new Peugeot Boxer van. The 'Win a Van' nationwide competition, which ran from 8th April through to 23rd October, 2015, was aimed at helping small construction firms and sole trade professionals keep up with demand for home improvements. A top-of-the-range Homevalue Peugeot Boxer van toured the country promoting the competition and was on show at participating Homevalue stores during the competition period. Brett Martin Plumbing & Drainage would like to congratulate Cathal Daly of Cathal Daly Roofing, based in Kiltegan in Co Wicklow, on winning the van. "I am absolutely thrilled with the win and would like to thank all the team at Lambert Hardware Homevalue in Hackettstown. A new van is a fantastic prize and an important asset to our business. It's particularly great to see the hardware industry supporting the trade so strongly," said Cathal Daly.

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HAI GOLF SOCIETY 2016 OUTINGS

HAI President Hugh O'Donnell's Prize

Venue: Glasson Golf Club, Athlone
 Date: Friday, 29th April
 Sponsor: Crown Paints

Denis Burke Memorial Cup

Venue: Mount Juliet Golf Club, Thomastown, Co Kilkenny
 Date: Friday, 27th May
 Sponsor: Bostik

Captain Hugh Taylor's Prize

Venue: Old Conna Golf Club, Bray, Co Wicklow.
 Date: Friday, 24th June
 Sponsor: Irish Abrasives

Extra outing for 2016

Venue: Faithlegg Golf Club (golf only €35)
 Date: Friday, 29th July
 Overnight available in the Tower Hotel, Waterford. Meal & B&B €80 pps. Subject to support as minimum number are required.

Golf Society President Frank McKeon's Prize

Venue: Forrest Little Golf Club
 Date: Friday, 26th August
 Sponsor: Tucks O'Brien

* Overseas trip 2016. Alvor, Portugal, 17th – 24th October
 Further details from Frank McKeon 086 2508374

Contact Willie Dixon for further information
 on the Golf outings, 086 070 8761



MacCann & Byrne has pioneered airtightness for over 15 years, with the multi-award-winning pro clima Intelligent Airtightness system.

MACCANN & BYRNE OFFERS AIRTIGHTNESS TRAINING

Builders providers and hardware merchants are now finding themselves faced with products and systems that can require very different skills from more traditional building materials and methods, particularly in the area of airtightness. With this in mind, MacCann & Byrne has developed a new hardware merchants airtightness training course to help address the skills gap facing the construction industry. Training is provided at MacCann & Byrne's training centre in Athboy, Co Meath. The facility includes a seminar room and trades training areas. The 'Centre of Knowledge' also includes a large showroom which will enable trainees to see large-scale models showcasing pro clima airtightness products and systems in a range of new build and refurbishment applications.

A MacCann & Byrne spokesperson says the company has pioneered airtightness for over 15 years now, with the multi-award winning pro clima intelligent airtightness system, putting it in a unique position to impart knowledge on this critical topic.

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Graduates of GMROI's Leadership Academy.

GRAFTON MERCHANTING NURTURES NEW LEADERS

For Grafton Merchanting ROI (GMROI), finding and keeping talent is no longer just a HR challenge, but a strategic business priority, according to Gareth McGrane, Head of HR GMROI.

Because leaders are in short supply, GMROI recognised that developing and equipping future leaders of the business would require a significant investment.

The company set about designing a Leadership Academy to ensure that it had a pipeline of talent ready, willing and able to lead and manage. From an analysis of its own high achievers, GMROI identified the following leadership competencies: emotional intelligence; interpersonal skills; social intelligence; decision-making; conflict management; entrepreneurship; influencing skills; ambition; and area expertise.

Following research and analysis, the company then identified the key aspects of the design of the Academy: succession planning; the creation of a talent pipeline; a job-ready focus; an industry-specific approach; and motivated and engaged participants.

In addition, Gareth noted, it was imperative that the Academy was designed not only to deliver classroom learnings, but also action and blended learning. "A partnership with the Institute of Leadership and Management enabled us to gain a City & Guilds Diploma." He continued: "We engaged the services of a leading business psychologist to design and evaluate a one-day assessment centre for 50 applicants."

In conjunction with the Assessment Centre, the applicants also underwent a TalentQ Dimension psychometric test. In total, 26 shortlisted applicants proceeded through an interview process. A competency-based interview was used to assess competencies such as interpersonal skills, leadership, attitude and behaviours. Candidates were ranked appropriately and the final 14 were chosen. The subsequent delivery of the individual modules took place over an 18-month period and was designed around 22 modules of two- and three-day duration.

The module schedule was deliberately designed as a development road map with key learnings at specific junctions, culminating in a two-day team building and leadership module held in Killary Adventure Centre. All 14 participants graduated at a ceremony in Carton House Hotel on 23rd October, 2015. Gareth sums up the results of the Academy Programme: "This Leadership Academy required significant investment in both time and resources, but the return on investment is significant."



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Reviewing 2015 and planning for 2016

Annemarie Harte, CEO, HAI, outlines what the Association has accomplished in 2015 and its objectives for this year.

In early 2015, HAI adopted a three-year Strategic Plan including a new mission statement: *'To advance the mutual interests of, and deliver relevant benefits to, hardware and builders merchants through effective representation, education, market intelligence and networking opportunities.'* This statement has been front of mind throughout last year and is the yardstick by which we measure all our activities, services and communications. I believe we have built a firm foundation during the year so that the Association will increase its value to members and be an attractive proposition to non-members.

The work to rebuild the Association, after a tough number of years following the construction crash, continues into 2016 and our aim is to be your trusted resource for the industry – whether it's for sourcing sector specific training, analysing market information, campaigning on your behalf or connecting you with your customers, colleagues and competitors.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED IN 2015:

- Established a monthly business index of net sales.
- Introduced sector specific training including social media, financial management and credit control.
- Launched an E-Learning platform so that online training and documentation is available 24/7 without leaving your business.
- Campaigned successfully to have the Home Renovation Incentive scheme extended for another 12 months until 31st December 2016.
- Increased our member numbers by 15%.
- Re-launched our website and provided increased communications to members and non-members.
- Hosted a very successful Hardware Show in Citywest.



In 2015, HAI's re-launch of its website included the introduction of a Members' Area, with exclusive access for HAI members.



In 2015, HAI launched an E-Learning platform offering New Employee Induction Training specifically tailored for the needs of hardware retailers and merchants.



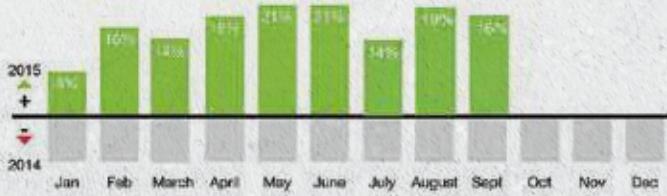
HAI increased member numbers by **15%** in 2015

WHAT WE LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2016:

- Improving our magazine, *The Hardware Journal* with better design and appropriate content, as showcased in this edition.
- Hosting the inaugural Hardware Conference to support our membership through the identification of future opportunities and threats.
- Providing more training courses including customer service, sales and e-commerce relevant to our industry.
- Launching The Hardware Education Hub – an online one-stop shop for education and information on the sector.
- Increasing the provision of market intelligence, trends and reports from home and abroad.
- Adding more relevant member discounts and offers.

These are just some of the items that we will deliver over the coming months, as the Association continues to evolve. Our future growth and ability to develop our services is wholly dependent on member numbers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank current members for continuing to support us and would welcome the opportunity to talk to those considering membership. Please call on **01 298 0969** or email **info@hardwareassociation.ie**

Monthly Business Index: % change in revenue from 2014 to 2015



The HAI monthly business index was established in 2015.



International Hardware Fair

PLenty of new ideas promised

The wait is almost over for fans of the International Hardware Fair, which takes place from 6th March to 8th March in Cologne.

According to the event organisers, the most important decision-makers, manufacturers and trade visitors in the hardware industry from all over the world will meet up in the exhibition halls of Koelnmesse to view pioneering innovations and the most exciting trends in the industry. In response to industry demand, the duration of the trade fair has been reduced to three days. Along with Italy, Germany is the European country with the highest number of exhibitors, followed by Great Britain. From outside the EU, China, Taiwan, India and the US are the most strongly represented countries.

PRODUCT TRENDS

The development of smart tech products continues to be a strong trend in the hardware sector. Several suppliers are picking up on this theme in Cologne. Plug and play will be the buzzword among exhibitors in this sector according to the fair organisers. In addition to smart home products for beginners, products from the professional alarm and security technology sector will be exhibited.

Care products and oils for maintenance, assembly, cleaning and servicing will be on display including products with new formulas and enhanced characteristics. Modified drilling and cutting oils which claim to increase the efficiency of metal-cutting tasks will be on view.

In the professional ladders sector, state-of-the-art products with comfort features such as particularly deep and profiled steps or abrasion-proof end caps for more safety will be on display. In order to make working at heights more comfortable, new models feature integrated work trays in which the tools and other utensils can be deposited so they are within reach.

TOOLS

Traditionally, the tools section is the most strongly represented sector at the trade fair. In 2016, approximately 1,650 exhibitors will be presenting their new products and innovations in Halls One to Four and in Hall 10. Products on view will range from axes to pliers and exhibitors will include the likes of Gedore, USAG and Witte.

There is an increasing emphasis on the ergonomic design of tools. For



EVENT PROGRAMME

The organisers say that trade visitors will also be offered a first-class event programme on all three days of the trade fair. Here we preview a few potential highlights.

The trade fair will include an e-commerce arena, sponsored by SSI Schäfer, featuring online suppliers such as Nexmart, Mercateo, and Toolineo, on Passage Four-Five in Koelhmesse, in order to provide concentrated information on the topic. The trade fair is staging an e-commerce Theme Day on Sunday, 6th March, for the first time. It will feature its own lecture programme and will take place on the stage next to the e-commerce arena. The lectures will revolve around the opportunities and risks of e-commerce, as well as the company presentations of the online suppliers. The first day of the trade fair will end with the Welcome Party (6.00pm) at the Tanzbrunnen.

On Monday, March 7th, interested buyers will meet up at the EISENForum during the BME Buyers' Day between 11am and 3pm. The BME is the German Association of Materials Management, Purchasing and Logistics and it is inviting buyers to the get-together, which will focus on optimising procurement processes. From 6.30pm onwards, the German Association of the DIY, Building and Garden Specialist Stores (BHB) is welcoming decision-makers from the trade, industry and service sector to the BHB Forum 2016 at the Theater am Tanzbrunnen.

On the final day of the trade fair, Tuesday, March 8th, the Matchmaking Programme Buying Day offers exclusive discussions with potential and international buyers from 9am to 5pm. in the Congress Centre East, Congress Saal Section 3.

example, ergonomic screwdrivers are being presented at the fair with handles made out of renewable raw materials.

The industrial supply product section in Hall Four will include around 450 exhibitors such as Brennstuhl, Keter and Telwin. Exhibitors will be presenting a wide range of products including compressed air tools, high-pressure cleaners, welding and soldering equipment, workshop equipment, shop/storeroom fittings, ladders and scaffolding, as well as products on the theme of work safety.

In Hall 5.2, approximately 350 exhibitors from the fasteners and fixings sector – such as Ambrovit, Lederer, and TOX Dübel – will be presenting products that will be available on the market over the next few months. The 'Fastener Forum' will feature lectures and discussions on the trends and changes in fasteners and fixings and will take place daily.

HOME IMPROVEMENT

The range of exhibits is rounded off by the home improvement section in Hall 5.1. Here, trade visitors can find the DIY supplies of around 250 exhibitors. Around 45 of these exhibitors will be presenting on the newly

created DIY Boulevard, which covers 210 metres and runs through the centre of the hall. As a result of the new concept, which is designed to suit the needs of the DIY exhibitors, this product section has recorded the highest number of trade fair returnees, including Fischer, Hettich, and Tesa, the organisers state.

Besides the latest innovations in the mainstream sectors, many innovative, niche developments will be seen at the fair. An example of this is the workshop trolley display. These trollies can be used to transport tools and working appliances, while also having the capability to act as workbenches. Some are easily expandable due to their modular design which ensures there is sufficient space so that expensive tools can be stored away safely. Some of the trollies are equipped with intelligent locking technologies that offer increased protection against theft and ensure that smartphones or tablets can be protected from unauthorised access.

For more information on the trade fair, go to: www.eisenwarenmesse.com

There is a one direct flight from Dublin to Cologne with Ryanair every day of the week if you haven't organised your travel already.

A busy stand at the 2014 International Hardware Fair.



The Sonas Bathrooms headquarters are located in Ballycoolin, Blanchardstown.



Flush with success

On her latest visit to a leading supplier, Annemarie Harte, CEO of HAI, stopped off at the headquarters of quality bathroom products provider Sonas Bathrooms and found a company dedicated to putting its customers first.

Producing a catalogue that looks the same size as the Bible is no easy task but that's what I find the owner of Sonas Bathrooms, Dermot Usher, doing when I meet him on my recent visit to the company. Dermot is in the middle of proofing 2016's mammoth Sonas directory for the sector, a product that has trebled in size in the last 10 years. "This should be the go-to guide to the industry. That's what we aim for," says Dermot. Judging by the amount of Post-It notes on this year's edition, Dermot takes great care to ensure that this does become the bathroom product bible for contractors, retailers, merchants and consumers.

INVESTING IN THE BUSINESS

"We started investing in our product ranges before the market started to come back," he notes. One look at the Sonas showroom, which takes up a whole floor in the building, gives testament to this. Open to members of the public and builders alike, this display of all things bathroom-related is very impressive, I was

particularly taken by the quality of the wall-hung bathroom furniture. It's a far cry from avocado suites and pink vanity units! The furniture is slick, modern and space-saving and lends itself to the achievement of a designer bathroom effect, even if the investment in the units themselves is moderate. "Our slogan would be 'Easy to do business with'. The variety we offer and the quality we demonstrate in the showroom is all about supporting our merchants," comments Richard Sloan, Managing Director of Sonas. "We have invested heavily in generating interest in the Sonas brand and believe we offer much more to our customers, in addition to competing on price."

NEW WEBSITE

The new Sonas website is a key element in the company's efforts to support the industry. All products from the Sonas catalogue are listed on the site with their recommended retail price. Although built on an e-commerce platform, the website doesn't facilitate the purchase of products directly but Sonas is aware that online research is now a crucial part of the end-user sales journey. "Everything we do promotes

REPORT FROM THE UK

The bathroom products market is estimated to have grown by around 5% in 2015, reflecting the continued steady improvement in the UK economy and the building and home improvement markets. The market has seen a steady increase since 2013, following a period of comparatively volatile market performance, with growth in 2014 estimated to have reached around 5%.

Baths and sanitary ware is the largest sector of the bathroom products market, accounting for over 35% by value, followed by bathroom accessories, taps and mixers and bathroom furniture, while whirlpool/spa systems account for a significantly smaller share. Key trends include investing in products that offer better quality and longevity combined with luxury. Materials that have a natural appearance and texture in combination with a subtle use of colour in soft, neutral tones have also grown in popularity while the use of industrial designs, which use rough textures with visible pipes and brickwork, has also continued to grow.

"Another key trend which has become increasingly important is the growing use of digital technology in UK bathrooms, something which has added value in a number of product sectors over the past two years" said Hayley Thornley, Research

Manager at AMA Research. "Examples include digital taps and sensors to control temperature and flow, mirrors featuring entertainment systems that use Bluetooth technology, whirlpool systems with chromotherapy, aromatherapy, integrated heaters and voice activated controls."

The outlook for the UK bathroom products market in 2016 looks positive with good growth also anticipated in the medium-longer term. By 2019, the market value is forecast to have increased by 14% compared to 2015. However, the bathroom market is becoming increasingly price competitive as low-cost imports continue to account for a sizeable proportion of bathroom products sold in the UK. In addition, the growing use of the internet to source the best deals is also having an impact.

The UK bathroom products market is forecast to continue to fragment and the number of own-label products, often sold via the internet, is likely to increase. Competition from non-UK suppliers is also likely to grow as they increasingly develop their own concepts and designs rather than providing copies of existing products. Pricing pressures are likely to remain intense due to a growing number of competitive distribution channels such as the internet, DIY multiples and multiple retailers.



The Sonas warehouse.



The Moda Rimfree. Rimless technology is set to be the next phase in the evolution of toilet design, according to Sonas.

the brand" says Richard. "We will be increasing our digital activity in 2016 and have taken on a full-time staff member to work on this." Sonas prides itself on a next-day delivery guarantee and concentrates its business on the Irish market. "In many cases, we can deliver quicker to Northern Ireland than some local suppliers," says Dermot. "The customer is king and we always put the customer first, that sums up the Sonas philosophy. We quietly go about our business while seeking every opportunity to instigate meaningful change in the market."

TRENDS TO WATCH

So, what's new for 2016? I'm quite excited to hear about the advent of rimless toilet technology, which may well spell the end for Toilet Duck. Sure to be a hit among all haters of toilet cleaning and, having seen it for myself, I'd be happy to vouch for the future success of this new and innovative product. Looking forward to opportunities and threats, Dermot says that new house builds will have the biggest positive impact on the market, while building regulations look set to drive up the cost of new builds and access to finance will continue to be a significant obstacle for builders and developers, as well as those seeking mortgages to finance the purchase of new homes.

If you have a story to tell as a supplier or manufacturer in the Irish market, please contact Annemarie on 01 298 0969 or annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie for more information.



Hub of hardware activity

BROOKS TIMBER & SUPPLIES LOOKS TO 2020

The hardware facility at Finisklin Road on the outskirts of Sligo, Brooks Timber & Building Supplies, has been an integral part of the business life of the town and the North West for over a century. Branch Manager, Karl Kelly, spoke to *The Hardware Journal* about how the store is currently performing and about plans to develop the premises over the next five years, as well as sharing some insights on regional trends in the hardware industry.

Brooks Timber & Building Supplies has a rich hardware heritage, operating as Hanley's for 100 years, before becoming a Brooks store in 1969. It has always been noted for its timber product and imported shiploads of timber into Sligo up until as recently as the late 1990s. While proud of its unique history, the team in place at Brooks today is very much focused on the future, according to Karl.

FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The Sligo store is now seven months into a five-year plan, Karl says. "The plan includes the widening of our product range and focusing on our stock management to ensure that we have the appropriate lines to meet the requirements of our customers including builders, trade and home and DIY customers."

As part of the plan, the store and the yard are undergoing significant redesign. "The first phase of the new design focused on the yard. As part of our overall commitment to continuously refining our health and safety measures, we have implemented a one-way system for vehicles using the yard. This has streamlined the way in which the yard is used and, as well as being safer, is also more efficient."

In addition, the yard infrastructure was enhanced and expanded with a view to ensuring that all product is under cover. "It is essential that we have the capability to store and properly protect an expanded range of products, particularly our timbers."

And the ultimate objective for 2020? "Our aim is to be an ultra-efficient regional sales hub for Brooks and to be a leader in supplying to builders, the trade and the home improvement customer."

A REGIONAL SALES HUB

The Brooks premises at Finisklin Road is on a large site, with three acres of yard, of which two acres are under roof. "With the substantial store capacity we have here, a convenient location, close to the town and easy accessibility from the N4, N15 and N16, the business has developed into a very effective regional hub for a wide catchment area, extending throughout the province and beyond. The amount of space we have allows us to be flexible as to the sizes and quantities of the deliveries we make. We can be responsive to our customers' needs, whether the customer is in Sligo, Donegal or Westmeath."

"We have the capability to make bigger deliveries and have three

trucks on the road every day. We are continuing to develop this side of the business, enhancing delivery practices and extending the range of products we offer. With the facilities we have here, there is a lot of potential to expand these services and to continue to develop the location as a hardware hub."

Casual footfall is split 60/40 between the home/DIY purchaser and the building and joinery trade customer respectively. In terms of overall volume, the lion's share of the business comes from the building and joinery trade customers and a significant proportion of business is done with merchants. "From here in Sligo, we make regular deliveries to many merchants, some on a weekly basis. All in all, we supply merchants up to 10 counties.

"We also have a team of sales representatives who are travelling around the wider North West region. They help us to stay in touch with our customers, to be fully aware of changing patterns of demand and to respond quickly to customers' needs.

A STRONG TEAM

Karl, who was appointed Branch Manager last year, has worked for more than 20 years in the building industry and joined Brooks a year and a half ago. "I'm delighted to be working with a strong team, made up of individuals with a diverse mix of product knowledge and a depth of experience that's vital in the day-to-day running of the business. It's even more important in the context of the challenges of implementing a five-year strategy in a consistent and effective way."

"As part of the team, we have an excellent admin back office here who work to targets and objectives. And, if there's any support needed from Brooks head office, it's always ready and available."

The Brooks brand has invested heavily in training and earning credentials in training. "Our experts in timber and experts in renewables give training courses to customers and architects in all our branches throughout the year."

Regular internal training is a key factor in ensuring the team is delivering the best quality of customer service: "We benefit from both in-house training with Brooks and regular updates and briefings from suppliers to ensure we have the latest product information. Our training initiatives also place a big emphasis on health and safety issues. Given the scale of deliveries we carry out and the large loads we deal with, that's vital."

PRODUCT TRENDS

Quality timber product has always been synonymous with the store, so it's no surprise to learn from Karl that it is one of their current best-selling product categories. "Timber has always been a strong performer for us and it's doing well at the moment."

Brooks Sligo has built on its timber heritage by developing and expanding its range of imported and national timbers. "Over the last few years, most timber purchases have been heavily influenced by pricing, but I've noticed that recently people are willing to spend a little bit more to get the better quality product.

"We see a lot of potential to expand this business and other product lines alongside it.

Slating, for instance, is also moving well at the moment – both natural and fibre cement slates are in demand. Cost-saving products that offer sustainable energy solutions are also popular and we work alongside our specialist insulation experts who have offices in all branches nationwide offering a full Part L solution to both trade and end users."



The in-store Finsa display.



Karl Kelly, Branch Manager.

POSITIVE ECONOMIC SIGNALS

The overall economy in the North West has seen a tentative recovery and, in conjunction with this, there has been an improvement in performance within the hardware industry, Karl says. "Overall, we've seen an increase in footfall and sales in 2015. It's been a steady improvement rather than a dramatic one but, given the industry's experience over the last few years, a consistent positive trend is very welcome. There's a noticeable increase in the stability of growth month-on-month.

"Of course, customers are still very price-sensitive and very much focused on value. I would have to say that, while there is a recovery, it's still very fragile. Looking ahead to 2016, I can see the steady, solid growth continuing on the basis that we continue to buy and promote our products well."

He notes: "In terms of areas that are showing some uplift, the self-build sector has come back to an extent. In addition, renovation work has

resulted in fairly steady business for us, and the HRI scheme has had an impact. Our business with merchants has also seen a real strengthening. That said, there's a long way to go. Capital spend, which is a real driver for the construction sector, is still below par."

TARGETED PROMOTIONS

The Brooks team consistently look to promote the store in imaginative ways. One of its most successful recent initiatives was a series of three breakfast mornings held in September, October and November. "For these mornings, which were part of a nationwide group initiative across the seven branches, we invited our suppliers to come in to the store to showcase their products and services to our trade customers.

"An added attraction was that Brooks teamed up with Opel to offer any trade customer who attended the mornings the chance to take part in a draw for an Opel Vivaro van. Suppliers who took part also offered incentives to encourage people to come along. For example, we had a fuel supplier providing special offers on diesel."

He adds: "We got a strong turnout from trade customers for all three mornings. From our point of view, the success of the events was topped off when the winner of the nationwide draw for the van turned out to be a local man and one of our customers, Adrian McPadden of McPadden Construction."

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Brooks Hanley in Sligo prioritises community involvement, supporting a range of local sports clubs, vital amenities and services, such as the North West Hospice, and important local cultural events, such as the Fleadh Cheoil, which was hosted in the town last year. Karl also gets directly involved in assisting local initiatives through his role as Chair of the Tidy Towns Committee and his membership of the Sligo Chamber of Commerce. "Brooks in Sligo understands the value of supporting all kinds of local initiatives. It's a way of giving back to the community and it also helps encourage the development of the area."





HAI President urges Government action on rural decline

HAI President, Hugh O'Donnell spoke exclusively to *The Hardware Journal*, in early December 2015, identifying some of the key challenges facing merchants, sharing his views on how HAI can further enhance the value it offers members and outlining the role the Association can play in addressing the issue of rural decline.

The Hardware Journal: You are now halfway through your term as President, at a time when the national economy is showing signs of sustained recovery. How do you see the recovery impacting on the hardware industry in general, and the individual merchant in particular?

Hugh O'Donnell: Regarding the overall economy, most relevant indicators suggest that recovery is relatively strong and gathering momentum. Latest forecasts predict that the Irish economy will expand by circa 6.5% in 2015, more than three times the EU average, slowing to a still strong 4 to 4.5% in 2016. The labour market is improving. The unemployment rate has fallen below 9%, the lowest level since late 2008. Consumer sentiment in November 2015 was at a level not seen since before the economic collapse and is reflected in positive consumer spending trends over the past 12 months (albeit influenced by surging car sales). Favourable external factors (weak euro, low oil price, relatively strong US and UK economies) are helping Irish exporters. Without doubt, at a macro level, the economy is performing exceptionally well and, notwithstanding some external risks (Brexit, China slowdown, etc.), the short-term outlook is positive.

The second part of your question, specific to our sector, is less straightforward. First of all, while house-building activity has fallen almost 90% from a peak of more than 90,000 units in 2006 and

construction industry output has fallen by approximately 70% over a similar period, the level of merchant capacity has not similarly contracted. While none of us likes to see merchants closing and jobs being lost, the inevitable consequences of over-capacity will continue for some time to slow a return to sustainable, profitable growth, especially in the more economically-challenged areas. Secondly, the so-called 'fruits of economic recovery', for well-documented reasons, have been felt mostly to-date within the Greater Dublin area. Thankfully, there are some positive signs in recent months that other parts of the country are also starting to experience improved trading conditions, though conditions in the Midlands and West of the country remain challenging. And thirdly, notwithstanding a welcome increase in RMI activity (boosted in part by the introduction of the HRI Scheme in Budget 2014), a healthy hardware sector requires a 'normalised' level of housebuilding activity, which is not yet evident. While there is broad consensus that underlying housing demand and demographics necessitate that a minimum of 25,000 units be built annually for the foreseeable future, the recently introduced Central Bank mortgage rules, the consequences of more onerous building regulations, the inflationary effects of building-related taxes and levies, and the inability of builders to access development finance, in particular, are holding back activity. So, I guess I have mixed feelings at this point about 'the recovery', though I'm more optimistic than pessimistic.

There is a lot of evidence (including recent HAI research) pointing to a two-speed recovery underway in our sector, with hardware merchants in larger cities and towns experiencing faster growth than those located in more rural locations. What steps do you think HAI can take to mitigate this problem?

As I mentioned earlier, I agree with the overall premise of your question, i.e., that the recovery is not yet evenly distributed around the country. Unfortunately, for rural merchants, there is a certain inevitability to this two-speed recovery – it was always going to be the case that recovery would start in and around Dublin, where the bulk of the population lives, which has the main access points to the rest of the country, and which has the most developed health and education infrastructure. Also, economic activity generally migrates towards the centre and Ireland is not alone in being impacted by rural economic and social decline; think the UK!

However, while regional disparities in Ireland are not unexpected, Government has a responsibility to implement policies to mitigate their impact. To the contrary, totally inadequate investment in rural infrastructure, the downgrading of hospitals, and the closure of Garda stations and post offices, for example, are all undermining the economic and social fabric of rural communities. Furthermore, planning decisions around the country have facilitated major out-of-town shopping developments with ample, free parking (just think Naas and Drogheda, as two examples), encouraging mobile consumers to travel and challenging the economic viability of rural and town centre businesses. At least in the UK, policy efforts are being made to reverse this trend, not so to date in Ireland.

Government must look seriously and urgently at policies related to planning, commercial rates, parking and IT infrastructure (especially broadband access) to help stem rural decline. Political rhetoric must be replaced by effective action, though I think most people fear the opposite will be the case for the next 6-12 months in the lead up to, and in the immediate aftermath of, a General Election. Further, the appointment in July 2014 of a Minister for Rural Affairs was welcomed but has had little real impact to date.

So what can HAI do to help? First and foremost, we can partner with other relevant organisations to ensure that key issues affecting rural Ireland – including some specific to our sector – remain prominent on the political agenda, including holding Government to account for implementing the 39 recommendations in the 2014 CEDRA (Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas) report. Second, we need to be more effective in making policymakers aware of the large economic contribution of our members, many of whom are located in rural communities, such that HAI's views and policy suggestions for rural Ireland are taken more seriously; we have recently commissioned an *Economic Impact Study* to quantify this impact. And third, we need to encourage and facilitate greater engagement with rural HAI members to ensure their needs are more adequately reflected in our policies and lobbying efforts.

What specific objectives do you hope to deliver during your Presidency? And what are some of the Association's longer-term strategic priorities?

The overriding objective during my Presidency is to stem the decline in Association membership, a by-product of the economic tsunami which hit our sector hardest. This is urgent. Without an active and engaged membership, the Association will fail, not only because of a lack of resources but also because it will not be deemed representative. For membership to increase, and acknowledging that everyone expects value



AVOIDING PAST MISTAKES

In his other role as Chief Executive of the Topline Group, Hugh has seen the effects of the economic downturn on business owners and their staff. *The Hardware Journal* asked Hugh what he saw as some key lessons to take into what we all hope will be a sustainable recovery.

I think most of us can be forgiven for not having the foresight to recognise what now seems obvious in hindsight! Very few predicted the speed or severity of the downturn. That said, I agree that lessons need to be learned to avoid a repeat of mistakes made.

HERE ARE A FEW THOUGHTS:

1. Just because you can borrow money, irrespective of how cheap or plentiful it is, doesn't mean you should. While accessing finance is a challenge right now, we shouldn't forget that its availability and misuse pre-2006 was responsible for much of the hardship of recent years.
2. Chasing turnover at the expense of profit is seldom a viable, long-term business strategy.
3. Prudent cost control is as essential in good times as it is in bad. A temporary lack of customer price sensitivity is no excuse for a rampant cost base.
4. During good times, try to understand the reasons why you are doing well. Identify the risks to sustaining success when you have the time and money to do so, not when crisis hits.
5. Stick to the knitting. Don't invest in what you don't understand.
6. Avoid 'absent landlord' syndrome. Business owners need to remain close enough to the business to know what's going on, even when things appear to be going well.
7. Risk matters. Managing it should be a core business activity, not an occasional reaction to sudden, unexpected shocks.
8. Employ an accountant who has both the commitment and the skills needed to develop a good understanding of your business, not just theirs.

for money, the Association needs to be relevant and deliver real, tangible benefits for its members. Encouragingly, total membership numbers increased by 48 during 2015 compared to a decline of 63 during 2014, a signal that both merchants and suppliers of all sizes are responding positively to the efforts being made. For example: HAI's lobbying during the previous Presidency directly resulted in the establishment in October 2013 of the HRI Scheme (credit for which was unfairly claimed by a number of other trade organisations) and, during 2015, HAI again successfully lobbied for its extension to the end of 2016. I think it's fair to assume that a reasonable portion of the €750 million spent by consumers to date under the scheme has been spent with HAI members, although the mechanics of the scheme make this difficult to quantify. The HAI Tradeshow in Citywest in February 2015 was one of our industry's largest and best attended events, both by exhibitors and merchants, and augurs well for the March 2017 Show. And looking forward, on April 6th and 7th, 2016, HAI will host its first ever National Conference in Lyrath Hotel, Kilkenny. With generous support from 10 prominent industry suppliers, this Conference will address one of HAI's most important objectives – to promote the ongoing professionalisation of our sector. I hope it can become a regular fixture in the Association's calendar. In fact, in broad terms, "professionalisation" is a theme which will underpin many of HAI's longer-term efforts and initiatives.

As someone who's committed to advancement of the industry, what do you believe are the particular strengths of HAI? And where do you see scope for HAI to improve its proposition?

First of all, I think that for any trade association to stand a chance of being effective, three essential conditions must exist - it must be representative

of and relevant to its grassroots membership; it must be adequately funded; and it must have a competent Board and management team with a genuine desire to identify and advance members' (mutual) interests. In the case of HAI, the economic downturn inevitably threatened the first two of these conditions. However, as I've already said, fortunes are starting to turn – membership is increasing, we had a very successful Tradeshow last February, our renewed lobbying efforts have begun to deliver tangible results, and there continues to be a very capable and committed Executive Committee and management team in place, all of whom are very focused on implementing a 3-year plan designed to strengthen the value of HAI to our members. In terms of particular strengths, HAI is the only trade organisation dedicated solely and exclusively to promoting the interests of the Hardware/Builders Merchant sector; no other trade organisation has this singular focus or can credibly make this claim. HAI is also somewhat unique in that it represents all levels of our sector's supply chain – builders' merchants, DIY retailers, manufacturers, importers and distributors. Regarding value proposition, there is undoubtedly huge scope for HAI to improve and expand its range of service offerings, both professional and social. For example, there is a real need across our sector for regular, credible market data; the retraining and upskilling of staff are key priorities for many HAI members following a significant period of downsizing and retrenchment; and increasing overhead costs provide HAI with an opportunity to deliver useful affinity schemes. These are just a few examples of where HAI can potentially add more value for its members. We are all determined to make further progress in 2016. Finally, I'd like to add my very best wishes to all HAI members for a happy and successful 2016 and I look forward to seeing as many as possible at HAI's inaugural Conference in April, 2016 in Kilkenny.

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TEC7 www.tec7.ie



Joe Schmidt



Peter Hindle MBE

THE HARDWARE CONFERENCE

Your future – opportunities and threats

6th/7th April



GLENNON BROTHERS



HAI is delighted to announce the full speaker line up on Thursday 7th April including Joe Schmidt, Head Coach, Irish Rugby team as the morning keynote speaker and Peter Hindle MBE from Saint Gobain as the afternoon keynote speaker. The full speaker line-up offers the perfect blend of economic reality together with online trends, customer behaviour and customer service, topped off with two prominent and best-in-class keynote speakers. If there's one event you need to attend this year, let this be it! Book now at www.thehardwareconference.ie

THE HARDWARE CONFERENCE

THE LOCATION

The luxury, sophistication and style of the Lyrath Estate Hotel are unsurpassed among Kilkenny hotels. Set in 170 acres of mature parkland, complete with picturesque lakes and golf course, the Estate is the definitive country resort. Located just 1.2 km from Kilkenny City, the 139-bedroom and multi-award winning five star hotel with spa offers some of the finest accommodation, dining, and conference facilities in Ireland.

Midway between Cork and Dublin with a journey time of approx. 90 minutes either way and with the same journey time from Galway, it is conveniently located off the M7 motorway and beside the cobbled streets of Kilkenny City. The city, overlooked by the majestic towers of Kilkenny's 12th century castle, is on the banks of the River Nore and home to the National Craft Gallery. Those looking to extend their stay to sample more of the Kilkenny experience can enjoy a range of outdoor pursuits including following well-signposted cycling trails and scenic loop walks.

SPEAKERS

The Conference will begin on **Wednesday, 6th April** with dinner in the evening, a guest speaker and plenty of time and opportunity for networking.

On the following day, **Thursday, 7th April**, the Conference starts at 9am (see panel on right for details).

	Conference (Including Dinner on the 6th of April)	Accommodation*	Dinner Only
HAI Member	€150	€95 for single	€60
Non- Member	€250	€105 for double	€70

*Lyrath Estate Hotel is now fully booked for accommodation. This special room rate for conference attendees is available at The Newpark Hotel, please contact the hotel directly on **056 776 0500** and quote "**The Hardware Conference**" when booking.



SPEAKER LINE-UP THURSDAY, 7TH

9.00am HAI President, **Hugh O'Donnell** – welcome and opening remarks

9.05am **Tony Foley**, Senior Lecturer and Head of the Economics, Finance and Entrepreneurship group, DCU. 'Is Ireland out of the economic woods?'

9.45am **Stephen Baker**, Manager, Home Sector, Large Customer Sales, EMEA; and **James O'Dwyer**, Senior Digital Consultant, Google 'What trends are emerging online that Hardware/DIY retailers should be paying attention to?'

10.30am Coffee break

10.50am **Alf Dunbar**, Creator and Founder of 'You are the difference' 'Differentiate or die-to-online – can Customer Service Excellence save your business?'

11.35am **Keynote**
Joe Schmidt: Head Coach, Irish Rugby Team
'Managing High Performance Teams'.

12.30pm Lunch

2.00pm **Ken Hughes**, Consumer and Shopper Behaviouralist 'It's never about the drill. Bringing Shopper Centricity to life in DIY'

3.00pm **Hubert Fitzpatrick**, Director, Construction Industry Federation 'Construction and Housing Trends: Where To from Now?'

3.30pm Coffee break

3.50pm **Keynote**
'A lifetime in merchanting' An interview with **Peter Hindle MBE**, Senior Vice President - Sustainable Habitat; General Delegate - UK, Ireland & South Africa, Saint-Gobain Limited; Chairman of the BMF; and Chairman of the Confederation of Timber Industries [CTI]

4.30pm HAI President, **Hugh O'Donnell** – closing remarks

Credit management:

STAYING ON GOOD TERMS

Declan Flood, aka The Credit Coach, continues his series on more effective credit management. In this article, he emphasises the importance of credit terms and their vital role in providing a foundation for sound credit management.

When people think of credit control, the first thing they think about is collecting the money that is owed. While that, of course, is the endgame, there are a number of stages you should go through first before you can excel at collections.

If you have been reading these articles you will know that the first step in credit is assessment, making sure the person or business that you are trusting with credit is, in fact, creditworthy. Taking chances can be expensive.

The next stage, may seem at first to be far too basic. However, it is a step that is often overlooked and misunderstood — it is your credit terms.

WHAT ARE YOUR CREDIT TERMS?

All too often when I ask what a merchant's credit terms are, I get answers like 30 days or 60 days. While it might sound like an answer, what does it really mean? Take the answer of 30 days — is it 30 days from date of order, date of dispatch, date of invoice, date of receipt of invoice or end of month following invoice? Vaguely defined credit terms are simply not good enough. They lead to confusion and arguments, and the last thing you want to do is fight with your customers; when you do, there can only be one loser. Just to check if I am talking rubbish here, have a look at your New Account Application Form — when it comes to payment, what does it say? Then, look at your Invoice — what payment instructions are printed on it? Next, look at your Statements — what is the payment due date? What about all the small print in your Terms & Conditions, what does it say? Finally, take a look at any quotations you send out — what are the payment terms on those?

KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER

There are two key factors to note here. Firstly, is something included on each of the above documents? If not, you are sending out the message that getting paid isn't important to you. You need to amend your paperwork straightaway, so everyone is clear.

Secondly, if you have something printed on each of the documents above — is it consistent? I have seen '30 days from date of invoice' printed on invoices while at the same time '30 days from end of month' is indicated in the Terms & Conditions. I have heard credit controllers say their terms are 30 days but nobody takes them seriously or their terms are 30 days

but the customers take 60 days. With omissions and inconsistencies like these, is it any wonder? In short, your credit terms should set out clearly and exactly when you expect to be paid by your customer.

GIVING CREDIT TO SELL MORE

I suggest you consider this: you should only give credit when you think it will help you to sell more. If you are going to make the sale anyway, what is the point in going to the trouble and expense of giving credit at all? If you must give credit, then 30 days from date of invoice might work for large one-off orders to reputable companies. This means that if the invoice is dated 15th October, payment is due on 14th November. If you are operating a monthly account, then consider something like 'Payment is due on the 28th day of the month following invoice'. That means that all goods purchased in October should be paid for on the 28th November.

If your terms are '28th day of the month following invoice' and there are customers that consistently take an extra month, then a clear decision has to be taken by asking yourself if you are happy with this? If you are, then change those customers' terms to '28th day of the second month' and get on with it.

To make this work for you, you have to have a clear payment date for every single order leaving your shop, and then those terms have to be enforced consistently by everyone, including sales and counter staff, the boss, the boardroom and the office.

We will deal with the collection cycle in a later edition. We have one more step to go through before we get there so I look forward to sharing that with you in the next issue.

Declan Flood: "In short, your credit terms should set out clearly and exactly when you expect to be paid by your customer."





An online shop is not only a great way of generating additional revenue 24/7 but it is also an opportunity to promote and upsell featured items.

Sales killers and sales winners

AN ONLINE SHOP STRATEGY

Mark McArdle of Intact Software on the importance of thinking through your approach to setting up an online shop.

While hardware retailers and builders merchants in the greater Dublin area saw the strongest rise in business activity last year (see HAI's Member Confidence Survey 2015), the rest of the country was slower to see the gains of an improving economy.

With more people buying online than ever before, the industry needs to start taking advantage of the increased market reach and potential sales revenues this sales channel could offer. For Irish retailers and merchants, the absence of an online sales presence in 2016 will put them at a huge disadvantage to competitors. It acts as a major disincentive to customers, for whom buying online is now the norm.

CUSTOMERS DO THEIR RESEARCH ONLINE

Countless studies have shown that consumers are doing their research online before they ever hit your store. They're looking for the best price, the most convenient way to purchase and how quickly they can get what they want. Take a moment to think of the possibilities:

- a local building contractor sitting at home watching the football placing his orders online for the next day's work;
- a young couple planning and costing a revamp of their bathroom; or,
- an active family enjoying the good weather (when we get it!) on a Friday evening planning to buy a BBQ.

They will all begin their research online and you have to be there to be considered. Some hardware stores offer a click and collect service where customers come in with the exact code of the product they're looking for. This is because they've done all their research and know exactly what they want. If collecting doesn't suit them, they can also get products delivered.

OPEN 24/7

An online shop is not only a great way of generating additional revenue 24/7 but it is also an opportunity to promote and upsell featured items, discount ranges and related products. One of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to add an online element to your business is to integrate a B2B or B2C e-commerce website to your business software system.

There is, however, a right way and a wrong way to go about setting up an e-commerce webshop, especially if you want it to integrate with your back-office system. Rush into it and you'll probably pay the price down the line. Get it right from the outset and an integrated webshop will see you managing a single database where all stock information, pricing and products are updated in real-time on your web store as changes are made in your back-office system.

Your investment will reflect the level of complexity required and the overall digital strategy you wish to pursue. While many businesses choose the path of least resistance and simply duplicate their ERP (enterprise resource planning) data to an independent website, this unfortunately can result in huge issues with data duplication, human error and timing problems.

Dive into your e-commerce project without a plan and you are sure to fall at the first hurdle. If you're thinking of embarking on this journey, you should treat it with the same level of importance and consideration as opening up a new physical branch or outlet. It requires plenty of thought, sufficient time, adequate resources and the right service provider.

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THE
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SHOW 2017



THE HARDWARE SHOW 2017

Home - Garden - Build - DIY

Hardware Association Ireland is delighted to announce details of The Hardware Show 2017 on Sunday 5th and Monday 6th March with the President's Ball on the evening of Saturday 4th March.

Following hot on the heels of a hugely successful 2015 Show, with full details announced to the industry on Thursday, 28th January at a breakfast briefing, Kieran Burke, Commercial Director of Grafton Merchanting ROI and Vice-President of Hardware Association Ireland, commented: "The 2017 Hardware Show will build on the success of the 2015 Show by enhancing both the visitor and exhibitor experience.

"The Show will be larger with a clear emphasis on attracting greater visitor numbers. To facilitate a 'bigger and better event', we are delighted to announce that the Show will take place in Ireland's premier conference facility, RDS Simmonscourt. I would encourage all stakeholders in the industry to participate – it's your Trade Show!"

What exhibitors had to say

"An excellent opportunity to meet new and existing clients in a convivial atmosphere."

Paul Swaine, Sales Manager, Deanta Wood Products

"Over the years, we have done a lot of shows. Both visually and organisationally this show is by far the best."

Martin Lane, MD, Watersave

"As a first-time exhibitor, we will be returning. The show has been excellent for our product launch."

Kevin Smith, Sales, K&S Industrial Supplies

"I believe the event is very worthwhile and it allows us to keep close to, and to support, our customer base. It also allows us to showcase our new products to the industry and to create awareness of them."

Kris Willis, National Sales Manager, The Keystone Group

FACT FILE 2015 – EXHIBITORS

- 3,160 m² of space sold with 155 exhibitors.
- 81% of exhibitors wanted to find new customers.
- 97% found exhibiting at the show very worthwhile or worthwhile.
- 88% planned on returning in 2017.



FACT FILE 2015 – VISITORS

- Almost 2,000 visitors over two days from across Ireland and the UK.
- 100% of visitors said the show was very worthwhile or worthwhile.
- 61% of visitors said their main reason for attending the show was to find new products and ideas.
- 69% of visitors said they had placed an order at the show or will place one as a result of the show.
- 88% identified new suppliers at the show.
- 94% said they will return in 2017.

FOR THE INDUSTRY, BY THE INDUSTRY

The Hardware Show is an event organised by the industry, for the industry, and together with our event management partner, Eventhaus, and our official magazine, *The Hardware Journal*, HAI will keep you updated over the next 12 months leading up to the Show. The Show has become the largest and most important event for the sector, both in Ireland and in the wider UK/Ireland marketplace.

The 2015 Show, with over 150 exhibitors, clearly signalled a renewed confidence in the industry following many years of struggle for both merchants and retailers. The purpose of the event is to showcase product innovation alongside a range of insightful demonstrations, workshops and presentations, all aimed at stimulating and educating stakeholders in the Irish hardware and building materials industry.

The 2017 Show will see the return of the highly successful Innovation Awards, the President's Ball and will introduce a new aspect, the Education Hub. Work has already begun on creating a new experience for visitors – a central area with presentations by leading experts in their field, skills-based demonstrations and best practice workshops in key areas for retailers and merchants in the industry.

Hardware Association Ireland invites you to participate in the Show both as an exhibitor and a visitor. Full details now available at www.thehardwareshow.ie

What visitors had to say

"Excellent show – bigger and better than before."

Gravel Hardware and Grocery, Johnstownbridge, Co. Kildare

"A great improvement on last year. I'll be back."

Enfield Hardware, Co. Meath

"The best one I've been to, a great variety of exhibitors."

Eden Tool Hire, Edenderry, Co. Offaly

Construction Products Regulations

Guidance with regard to compliance

In the previous edition of *The Hardware Journal*, Siobhan Kenny of Frank Murphy Solicitors drew your attention to the Construction Products Regulations and the obligations of merchants and suppliers to the Construction Industry arising under the Regulations. Siobhan now continues her guidance.

As we know, the Regulations impact on all businesses supplying manufactured products for use in the Construction Industry. What steps can you take to make sure that your organisation is compliant? The definition of 'construction product' is very broad. As a rule of thumb, a 'construction product' is any product intended to be incorporated into permanent works. The following guidance is provided on a general level to assist in the putting in place of systems to ensure compliance with the obligations.

FAMILIARISATION

Suppliers of Construction Products should familiarise themselves with the requirements of the Regulations, with templates of compliant documents, and with the kind of documents that they are required, in law, to provide to their customers with such products.

Your suppliers should be informed that all construction products you order from them must be CE marked and must be accompanied by relevant documents. This should form part of the terms on which you order products from those suppliers.

Most, if not all, EU-based manufacturers of products commonly used in construction projects (and a great many operating outside the EU zone) are very familiar with the Regulations and the introduction of this term should not be controversial. The most time-efficient and effective stage at which to verify that the products you have ordered from your supplier are CPR-compliant is when they are delivered.

The following requirements should be met:

1. THE CE MARK

The first and most obvious check – verify that all products supplied to you have a conforming CE mark. The rules are very stringent – it must be in a particular form, and in a recognisable and specific font. If the mark does not meet those requirements, then the product is not compliant. It can be in any size, provided it looks like the specific example. Please see sample of the mark (Figure 1) which, according to guidance offered by the Department of the Environment, is a compliant mark.

2. THE CE INFORMATION

The following information must be provided to you with the product. It will either be on the product or, where that is not possible, on the packaging. It is important to check that these details are provided with the products supplied.

- the CE mark should be followed by the last two digits of the year in which it was first affixed;
- the name and address of the manufacturer or a recognisable trademark should be on the CE mark;
- the CE mark should be accompanied by a unique ID code of the

product type;

- the CE mark should include a reference number for the Declaration of Performance (see Figure 2);
- the CE mark should include a class of performance which has been declared;
- the harmonised technical specification should be set out. This is a reference number for an EU classification;
- in some cases, test results have to be sent to a notified body. If so, the notified body should be identified on the CE mark; and,
- the intended use of the product (as laid down in the harmonised technical specification) should be included.

A copy of the kind of labelling to be expected can be found in the Building Regulations Advisory Board Information Notice. For more details, go to: www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/BuildingStandards/FileDownLoad,30649,en.pdf

3. THE DECLARATION OF PERFORMANCE/CONFORMITY

This is the declaration from the manufacturer setting out the particulars of his product, providing details of the purpose and function of the product, and telling your customer (e.g. contractors, designers or specifiers) what the product does, what tests it has undergone, and what uses it might have. You have to make sure that you have been provided with a copy of the Declaration of Performance (D of P) with each construction product you sell. Manufacturers are required to provide D of Ps with their products as part of the package of documents. Your customers will look for these when ordering those products from you. By law, and in order to make sure that you are in a position to provide the documents to your customer, you need to make sure that when the products are delivered to you, the D of P is provided.

By providing all of this information, the manufacturer allows the designers, specifiers or contractors to inform themselves about the product. This declaration lies at the heart of the Regulations, the point of which is to allow potential users to make informed decisions when choosing products.

The D of P must, in Ireland, be in English, and the manufacturer must ensure that it is in line with templates set out in the Regulations. The information provided is detailed and identifies the product and its characteristics by reference to 'harmonised technical specifications', i.e., specifications for individual products which have been developed on a European-wide basis and are product specific. The EU has determined which specifications apply to different types of products, and having done so, what tests the product must undergo before going on the market.

4. OTHER DOCUMENTS/INFORMATION

The materials provided should also include instructions for the safe use, handling and storage of the product. Manufacturers have been providing this information as a matter of course for years – you will usually find it printed on the product itself. Where that is not possible, it needs to be provided to you as part of the package of documents.



Figure 1



Figure 2

5. STORAGE

Once you have received the delivery, checked that it is properly marked, that the required instructions for use and safe storage etc are properly endorsed on the product or included in the materials provided, and that you have been provided with all additional documents – and in particular the D of P – you are in a position to sell that construction product to your customer.

You need to make sure that, pending sale to a customer, the product is stored safely and in such a way as to ensure that the performance of the product will not be impacted during the period of storage. In some cases, the manufacturer will need to provide you with specific handling and storage instructions (e.g. temperature; light or shade; periods of storage, etc) These kind of instructions should be clearly communicated to you by the manufacturer.

6. DELIVERY OF RELEVANT MATERIALS

When the product is selected by a customer, you have to provide the relevant

package of documents/information to that customer. Your customer should end up with a CE-marked product, on which full details of its CE marking appear (on product or packaging), and on which instructions as to how to use, handle and store it effectively and safely are endorsed. Your customer must also be provided with a fully detailed D of P, together with any other documents provided to you by the manufacturer in compliance with their own obligations under the Regulations. As stated, the point of the Regulations is to foster free trade by ensuring that full information about competing products is provided. The designers and specifiers decide whether or not that product is suitable for a particular purpose within the project – neither the manufacturer nor the distributor has any role in that decision.

It is not intended that the content of this article be treated or considered to be legal advice. It is provided for general information purposes only.

**Contact Siobhan Kenny, Frank Murphy
Solicitors on 01 283 5252 or
skenny@fmlaw.ie**

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To deliver an unrivalled customer service and meet our ambitious sales targets, you must have wide-ranging experience of specifying and supplying products for major commercial projects. You should also have experience of going above and beyond to provide value added services and meet the needs of construction clients, ideally gained at a supplier.

Closing date: Tuesday 1st March. For more detailed information on this position, please visit our careers section on www.wavin.ie

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e-commerce

Online potential – are you ready?

Online sales have tremendous potential. This article looks at the establishment of a Retail and Digital Economy Working Group and the strategies being adopted by merchants operating on the frontline.

Annemarie Harte, HAI CEO, is a member of the Retail Consultation Forum's Retail and the Digital Economy Working Group. The Group reports directly to 'Super Junior' Minister for Business and Employment, Ged Nash. The digital economy has been identified by the members of the Retail Consultation Forum as a key issue to examine. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation – which HAI presented to in September 2014 – also made recommendations in relation to online retailing and creating a digital high street in its report on 'Policy Options to support Business Growth and Job Creation and Retention in Town and Village Centres'. Following this, it was decided to create a Retail and Digital Economy Working Group tasked with examining two particular challenges for the sector: the development of training in online sales and social media in order to meet the skills requirements needed by the sector to avail of the opportunities of the digital economy; and the development of shared e-commerce infrastructures for towns and villages.

ONLINE SALES

Online sales in Ireland continue to rise with €8.4 billion spent in 2014 or 5% of GDP. But, with 70% being spent outside the country should we be taking online traders from abroad as a serious threat to traditional bricks and mortar businesses? By 2020, the value of the digital economy is expected to more than double to 10% of GDP and €21 billion. While Irish consumers have wholeheartedly embraced online shopping, many Irish SMEs have not kept pace with this consumer revolution by moving to sell their goods and services online, in addition to traditional

methods. This is particularly evident with retailers and merchants in the hardware and building materials sector. The numbers above highlight the opportunities which exist for Irish SMEs to grow their market share, strengthen their turnover and profitability and increase their workforces. For businesses, increased digitisation can drive sales, reduce trading costs and open new paths to markets in terms of engaging directly with consumers and customers.

NEW ERA FOR BRICKS-AND-MORTAR

The value proposition of bricks-and-mortar stores is changing. Consumers are constantly using the internet to research and gather information about future purchases, yet they still head to stores for in-person experiences. Shoppers crave unique, customised and personal interactions they can't get from visiting a website. In our sector, we have a unique proposition. We are problem-solvers. Driven by high-quality customer service, we have the opportunity to become invaluable, in a way that no website or online transaction can ever be. However, it remains vital that all stakeholders redouble their efforts to get Irish business online. The opportunity is too great and the loss to the Irish economy too substantial to ignore.

ONLINE-ONLY – HOW TO COMPETE

Alan Grant, Owner of Expert Hardware, Inchicore and mydly.ie spoke to *The Hardware Journal* about his online presence and whether he feels threatened by online-only traders, he said: "The more we looked at our company the more we realised we needed to become an omni-

channel retailer with a number of ways to connect with, and sell to, our customers. Our main aim when we set out was to make things simple for both the customer and ourselves. We decided on a cloud-based system to run our EPOS, website and accounts system so this would cut out any duplicated work.

"We use Facebook, Google Ads, email, texts and soon we will be doing YouTube demos to drive traffic to the site. At this stage, 6% of our annual sales are from the website and it's only live 13 months. We will keep our online sales growing by keeping our past online customers informed of latest offers. We will also be offering free shipping for all online orders at the end of March."

Alan concluded: "We don't see online-only traders as a threat for three key reasons:

- customers really do value dealing with an Irish company that supports local jobs;
- they ship from abroad resulting in a longer delivery time from time of purchase; and,
- in general, they offer zero customer support."

For another perspective, *The Hardware Journal* spoke to Joe Connolly of Stakelums Home & Hardware, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, who

outlined the background to the development of **stakelums.ie**: "We developed an e-commerce website in order to reach out to a larger audience, so that our shop remains open 24/7, and, to build brand recognition, generate leads and transactional sales. We drive traffic to our website through:

- the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram);
- offline advertising including radio and print;
- paid search such as Google Adwords and pay-per-click campaigns;
- referral websites such as Pricespy;
- blogging and use of keywords;
- backlinks on partner and supplier websites; and,
- email newsletters.

"We intend to grow our online sales over the next 12 months by increasing our spend and activity in all these aspects. We are also going to work with key suppliers who help build online presence through specific PPC campaigns and social media competitions. Currently, the percentage of our annual sales that come through our website is less than 1% but the effect it has on footfall through the doors is immeasurable." When asked about the threat of the entry of online-only traders from abroad, Joe said: "Any competitor entering this space is a threat."

THE CHANGING CUSTOMER

Businesses need to understand that their current customers, Generation X (people born from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s) are savvy consumers who pride themselves on making informed purchasing decisions and who often turn to the internet when searching for the best value for their money. Their future customers, Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000), have grown up in a time of rapid change, giving them a set of priorities and expectations sharply different from previous generations. They are used to instant access to price comparisons, product information and peer reviews.

Data from the US says that regardless of age, homeowners can agree on two things: getting the best deal, and shopping online. Consumers with a heavy DIY focus look for deals frequently; where they look depends on generational factors. Younger segments are looking online and, increasingly, on social media, while older segments continue to look for coupons in the newspaper or through their mail. Across the board, consumers are going online for their home improvement needs more than ever before. In a recent study, homeowners with a heavy DIY focus were more than twice as likely as others to say their frequency of online purchasing is "much more frequent" than just one year ago — creating an opportunity for manufacturers regardless of retail channel.

The Consumer Barometer by Google is a tool to help businesses understand how consumers use the internet in their purchasing decisions specific to certain product categories. According to research carried out by Google, over half of those who purchased a DIY product in Ireland in the past 12 months first learned of the product they purchased either online or on an app. Nearly 25% completed their purchase online, with 30% researching online and purchasing offline, highlighting the importance of omni-channel sales paths.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Whether or not the threat of new entrants to the market is a reason to take your online presence seriously or not, the evidence is clear, online sales are here to stay. Deciding that it won't affect the very traditional sales model of builders merchants is short-sighted, online sales continue to rise with €8.4 billion spent in 2014 in Ireland but with 70% of that being spent outside the country the Government is eager to support your business to help claw back some of that money.

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme is one such initiative that is probably the simplest and easiest way to demystify where to get started or improve your online presence and get a helpful financial hand too. Originally due to end by 2015 funding has now been approved for 2016, full details are available through www.localenterprise.ie or contact your Local Enterprise Office (LEO). There are 31 offices throughout the country and 8th to the 12th March is Local Enterprise Week so why not put a date in your diary to contact them about developing your online business?

90%+
16-29 year olds use
the internet daily

(Source: CSO Ireland)

**Top reasons for online
product research:**
comparing prices, purchase locations &
availability, and, ideas & inspirations

(Source: Google consumer barometer)

2.1m

Online Shoppers in Ireland

(Source: Paypal)

E-commerce
sales
increased
16% year-on-year
in December
2015

compared
to a
3.8% increase in
face-to-face
sales

(Source: Visa Consumer Spending Index Ireland)

HAI member offers and discounts

Member services are at the heart of adding value to your business. HAI will negotiate special offers and discounts on standard business services so you don't have to. We can do this because of the strength of our membership numbers.

Our member offers and discounts are exclusive to members of HAI. A full list is available on our website.

ENERGIA

We have partnered with Energia in the provision of an Energy Efficiency Funding Scheme 'Cash for Kilowatts' that gives retailers up to 30% of the cost of the project. The replacement of lighting, as well as upgrading heating systems and refrigeration, variable speed drives and air compressors are all included in the funding scheme. For further information please contact Amanda on 01 298 0969 or amanda@hardwareassociation.ie.



HMCA

Hospital & Medical Care Association (HMCA) is now offering HAI members up to 25% off the following plans: Care Cash, Life, Dental, Travel, Personal Accident and Vehicle Breakdown. Please call Donna or Lisa on 01 6130316 for an informal chat.



PROMOPOS

Promopos is offering 20% off to HAI members, who become new customers to their service. Promopos supply a large range of pre-designed templates which are customisable and printable for individual in-store marketing requirements. For information on how to avail of this offer contact: Bill McConnell at: bill@documation.ie or 01-6535008. www.promopos.com



IMAGINE

Imagine will provide a free audit of your current phone bill. HAI has also negotiated discounted rates available to all members. Contact: David Walsh, david.walsh@imaginegroup.ie or 086 1738243.



REPAK

HAI negotiated competitive Repak membership rates for the hardware and building materials sector. Repak are also offering HAI members new to Repak 5% off their rates until February 28th, 2016. Find out more at www.repak.ie or call 01 4670190.



Not a HAI member?

For membership enquiries, please contact Jim on **087 6671361** or jim@hardwareassociation.ie



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AIB Merchant Services is offering HAI members an exclusive offer on card terminal and transaction rates. For more information, please contact Amanda on **01 298 0969**.



Merchant Services

THOMPSON INSURANCE

Insurance premium rocketed this year?

HAI has partnered with Thompson Insurances to offer members a FREE, no obligation, risk management survey. This includes: A full review of existing covers, advice on any gaps in cover, and technical support in relation to the understanding of policy wordings. For further information please contact amanda@hardwareassociation.ie or call Amanda on **01 298 0969**.



NETWORKING AND TRAINING

- HAI supplier members can avail of discount advertising rates in The Hardware Journal, as well as discounts on stands at The Hardware Show.
- HAI holds a busy training schedule throughout the year; both online and offline member training rates are heavily discounted. The classroom schedule for the first quarter of 2016 includes Social Media, Sales, Customer Service and Credit Control. Members can also purchase New Employee Induction Training on the HAI E-Learning platform.
- In April 2016, HAI will be holding The Hardware Conference, see further details on page 28.



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Tegrad

High expectations for roofing

Planning figures, in particular, a 35% increase in floor area approvals, demonstrate the growth potential in the roofing products sector.

Latest planning permission statistics from the CSO show that in the period January-September 2015, a total of 3,282,000m² of floor area planned was granted permission, representing an overall increase of 35% on the same period last year.

A total of 1,519,000m² was approved for new dwellings with a one-off house having an average floor area of 243m² and a scheme house having an average floor area of 144m². Of the total floor area planned for new houses and apartments over the year so far, one-off houses accounted for 44%, multi-development houses 48%, and apartments 8% (see page 6 for full breakdown by county).

In regards to agricultural buildings, the first nine months of 2015 saw an increase of 35% on the same period in 2014. In total, 494,000m² of floor area was granted permission compared to 352,000m² over the same period the previous year, reflecting a substantial 40% increase.

New constructions in the Buildings for Commercial and Industrial Use category have also experienced growth, up 40% in the floor area planned with 402,000m² approved. The trend continues into Buildings for Health, Education and Social Use with a total of 422,000m² planned, up on last year by 18%.

While planning permission rates are high, commencement notices and completion rates are slow as securing finance to build developments remains a major stumbling block. However the outlook remains positive and provides strong potential for growth in the supply of roofing products to the domestic market over the next 12 months (Many thanks to Claire Kelly of Tegral for supplying the statistics).

THE ROOFER'S "BEST KEPT SECRET"

The roofer's best kept secret is finally out. According to Everbuild, it's Aquaseal Liquid Roof, the new, one-component, easy-to-use, all-weather roofing system, ideal for waterproofing flat and pitched roofs. The product, from Everbuild, a Sika company, creates a solid waterproof membrane, which covers the entire area without any seams.

Liquid Roof is applied in two coats straight from the tin and has a moisture-triggered curing system to allow fast curing. Liquid Roof is completely rain resistant after just 10 minutes and will even cure if a pool of water forms on top of it, according to Everbuild. Suitable for use on a variety of substrates including concrete, mortar, brick and stone, Liquid Roof can be used on new roofs as well as refurbishing old.

Available in slate grey colour in 7kg and 21kg tins, Liquid Roof will leave you with a professional-looking, fully waterproof roof in just five easy steps.



Aquaseal Liquid Roof – the one-component, all-weather roofing system.



IKO has an extensive range of torch-applied roofing systems.

TORCH-APPLIED ROOFING

IKO describes its range of torch-applied roofing systems as being one of the most recognised, established and trusted product lines across Ireland and Europe. An IKO spokesperson commented: "It is because of our unparalleled choice of flat roof waterproofing systems that IKO is the preferred partner for so many building merchants, specifiers, contractors, and local authorities throughout the country. Regardless of your budget, IKO has a product to suit your project, torch-on or cold applied. Whether it's new build or a refurbishment project, installation by a skilled contractor or by a DIY enthusiast, there is a solution to meet every need and budget." IKO offers a diverse range of bituminous flat roofing membranes, as well as manufacturing and distributing an extensive range of Hyload structural waterproofing products, IKO Rubershield pitched roofing membranes, IKOflash lead-replacement flashings, IKOpro innovative liquid applied systems and the world-renowned range of bitumen roofing shingles. The spokesperson added: "It is this product diversity which enables us to be the first point of contact for our merchant partners with any roofing or waterproofing project, whether it is a private dwelling or commercial development, one roof or many."

AIRTIGHT AND WINDTIGHT

MacCann & Byrne imports and distributes the complete range of pro clima high performance intelligent airtightness and windtightness membranes tapes and seals. It is now widely accepted that wind penetration of roofs can lead to a significant reduction in thermal performance. In recognition of this, MacCann & Byrne have launched pro clima Solitex Plus Connect. Solitex Plus Connect is a windtight, yet diffusion-open, vapour permeable membrane, suitable for pitched roofs. Solitex Plus Connect features a pre-applied tape guaranteeing optimal windtightness for pitched roofs.

Niall Crosson, Senior Engineer at MacCann & Byrne outlines the key features of Solitex Plus: "Unlike many conventional breather membranes, which use an air-permeable micro-porous technology, Solitex Plus

NEW
TECHNOLOGY



LIQUID ROOF

EASY TO USE, ALL WEATHER ROOFING SYSTEM

Squid Seal Liquid Roof is the perfect solution to any flat or pitched roof problem. It creates a solid waterproof membrane covering the entire roof without any seams. It is a polymer based, moisture curing, ready to use product for all roof areas from new projects, waterproofing to renewing or existing, leaky roof with excellent adhesion to both porous and non-porous materials.

With its quick application to a variety of substrates, this fast curing membrane can be in service in a range of weather conditions and has a durability rate reduced to just 10 minutes. Liquid Roof will ensure it is a pool of water for many years to come.

- PU Waterproof Liquid Membrane For Flat And Pitched Roofs
- For New Roofs And The Rehabilitation Of Old
- Fast Curing - Cure Reduced To 10 Minutes
- Moisture Curing Technology - No Catalyst Required
- Ready To Use - Apply With Brush Or Roller

EASY TO USE IN JUST 5 SIMPLE STEPS



Scrub the roof surface with a rough brush and then allow dust and loose debris removed.



Apply Liquid Roof to the roof surface by roller or brush. It is important to apply evenly, covering the roof substrate.



Allow Liquid Roof to cure for 10 minutes (minimum) or 10 minutes at 30°C or 10 minutes at 20°C.



Apply Liquid Roof to the roof surface by roller or brush. It is important to apply evenly, covering the roof substrate.



Waterproof, flat roof and pitched roof system.

DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT - HAVE A LOOK AT THE ADDITIONAL LIQUID ROOF INFO



Connect features a pre-applied tape, an integrated reinforcement netting and employs a closed cell, vapour permeable layer."

This provides a combination of key benefits, Niall notes, including:

- optimum windtightness and weathertightness with pre-applied tape;
- greater cost-effectiveness and increased speed of application with pre-applied tape;
- extreme resistance to wood preservatives, wood treatments or natural wood resins;
- extreme resistance to on-site chemicals;
- complete resistance to air penetration;
- extreme nail-tear resistance;
- extreme watertightness;
- exceptional thermal stability; and,
- high levels of protection against condensation due to high vapour permeability.

Niall sums up: "As the roofing membrane is the second line of defence for the roof, it is absolutely essential that it provides optimum resistance to wind-driven rain, which we are accustomed to in Ireland, as well as minimising condensation risk. With Solitex Plus Connect, this performance is guaranteed under extreme conditions typically found on construction sites where roofing membranes need to provide durable protection against intruding dampness, particularly in exposed areas during the building phase."

With proven reliability and performance, Solitex Plus Connect not only optimises weathertightness but also maximises thermal performance. The German engineered and produced Solitex Plus Connect roofing membrane has full British Board of

Agrement Approval.

Solitex Plus Connect is a windtight, yet diffusion-open, vapour permeable membrane, suitable for pitched roofs.



Paddy Kelly, MD, Tegral.

LEADING THE WAY

2015 has been a busy year for Tegral, Ireland's longest established manufacturer of roofing materials. Living up to its reputation as the market leader, the company has invested heavily in training and innovation this past year.

In March, the company officially launched the Tegral Academy. Established as a centre of excellence for roofing contractors, the Tegral Academy aims to raise the standards of roofing in Ireland today. Initial plans were to train 300 to 400 delegates in best practice

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standards of roofing and, due to a hugely positive industry response and an overwhelming demand, Tegral increased its number of training days in 2015. In fact, by the end of the year, it had trained almost 500 roofing contractors.

In June, Tegral launched Endurance, which it describes as Ireland's strongest slate. Tegral says it is the highest density slate on the Irish market, offering the best resistance to Ireland's famously volatile weather, with extra fibres that give the product its highest flexural strength and a specialist silicone paint providing a unique type of water repellence.

Then, in October, Tegral launched Vertigo, the first range of fibre cement slates specifically designed for use on vertical facades, as well as roofs, according to the company, opening up a host of creative possibilities for architects. Vertigo was specifically developed in response to the growing trend towards using fibre cement slates across the whole building envelope.

And to top off what has been a very rewarding year for Tegral, the company also managed to maintain its BES 6001 Sustainability Standard, once again achieving the "Very Good" rating. This demonstrates that Tegral products are made with materials that have been responsibly sourced from suppliers who have documented health, safety, quality and environment systems and underpins Tegral's ongoing commitment to sustainability.

Paddy Kelly, MD, Tegral commented: "The year ahead marks an important milestone for Tegral, as it is our 80-year anniversary. Being in business for so long wouldn't have been possible without a strong reputation for quality products, competitiveness and continuous innovation, all of which we are very proud of, and we will continue in this vein throughout 2016."



Steico tradejoist is available in Ireland through suppliers Wood Concepts.

I-JOIST INNOVATION

Steico, a leading European manufacturer of engineered timber joists, offers a bespoke, enhanced floor/roof joist designed especially for the smaller developer and renovator. The product, Steico Tradejoist, is available in Ireland through suppliers, Wood Concepts. It offers what Wood Concepts describes as a simpler engineered timber floor/roof solution for house-building, self-build, and home improvement or renovation projects.

The complete kit, combining tradejoist beams with either Weatherdek or new weatherprotect panels and fixing accessories, ensures a superior performance, according to Steico. Wood Concepts says this initiative is a positive move to simplify the I-joist experience for smaller users and developers, and to open up the supply chain to non-specialist merchant customers.

Steico tradejoist uses a simplified single specification TJ60/220mm deep I-joist format available 'off the shelf' in three cut lengths: 3.6m, 4.8m and 6.0m. All the accessory products are provided to complete the project. According to Steico, key features include: spans up to 5m for standard loads; solid timber flange for ease of fixing; colour-coated for enhanced moisture resistance; beams are clearly stamped with usage criteria; lightweight and easy to cut; and ease of access for all service runs and ducting.

IKO For the complete range of torch-on or cold applied flat roof waterproofing systems



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Kit of Insulation	✗	✗	✗
Internal partition	✗	✗	✗
External Wall	✗	✗	✗
Roofing Slab	✗	✗	✗
External Wall	✗	✗	✗



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Good growth in gardening market

Following the upward trend in recent years, the indications are that Ireland's gardening market could be set to grow again this year

A Bord Bia report on research carried out by IPSOS MRBI in 2015 showed that Irish people spent €614 million on their gardens in the previous year. This is up 22% on the previous research carried out in 2011.

Landscaping, referring to any consumer spend on garden design and maintenance, is valued at €118 million, demonstrating an increase of 22% since 2011. Females are the biggest purchasers across most of the categories, while the over-55s are dominating the consumer spend. Garden products, such as garden furniture and BBQ equipment, have also seen their market share bounce in 2014 to €303 million, compared with €218 million in 2011. Independent garden centres and DIY garden centres hold close to a 50% share of the garden market, valued at €513 million.

Ireland's gardening market is showing strong signs of recovery, and trends in general would suggest that this year will see another increase.



True Temper has announced the launch of its new Darby range upgrade.

AMES TRUE TEMPER

Ames True Temper has announced the launch of its new Darby range upgrade as part of its two-year brand revitalisation programme. "This review has been a work in progress for almost two years now," said Niall Nugent, Sales and Marketing Director. "We felt the timing was right to give the Darby brand a complete overhaul. "We invested heavily in various forms of market research, including a major online survey to identify consumer shopping habits when it comes to tools, followed by some very detailed focus groups in both Ireland and the UK, to validate what we were proposing in terms of additional

features and benefits. Listening to the consumers responsible for buying our tools gave us a very clear insight into their needs and requirements. Darby is the market leader within the professional tool sector in Ireland and with additional upgrades such as extra large footsteps, longer collars, new steel D grips and many more added features, the brand position is securely fastened for a long time to come."



Bord na Móna Growise features colourful packaging.

BORD NA MÓNA

This season, Bord na Móna is launching the Growise brand. Growise features colourful packaging enhanced with clear and easy-to-understand advice, and instructions to ensure customers are able to choose the right products for the best results, according to the company.

"The range of composts are carefully balanced to meet the nutritional needs of plants at different growth stages, from getting started to a grow-your-own range of planters and growing bags," a Bord na Móna spokesperson said. "The range contains a minimum of 25% alternative green compost. The multi-purpose compost ensure healthy and vigorous plants at all stages of growth under a wide variety of situations, in addition to Bord na Móna's specialists, soil improvers and bark range."

The Bord na Móna Growise multipurpose compost gained a 'Best Buy' accolade in 2015 for Growise Multipurpose from Which?, and is nominated again this year. Complementing the Bord na Móna Growise brand is the well-known range of Shamrock composts and decorative bark.

"Bord na Móna is all about giving our trade customers the reassurance of buying best-in-class, with seasonal point of sale support solutions while ensuring the consumer gets great results every time," a company spokesperson said.

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DS SUPPLIES LTD

DS Supplies Ltd advises that its range of artificial grass and hedging, along with its anti-slip decking strip, provide a quick, simple and low-maintenance solution, which can be easily installed by any avid DIY enthusiast.

“Our artificial grass and hedging are realistic-looking and maintenance-free,” a spokesperson said. “Ideal for domestic and landscaping projects, from lawns to playing surfaces, our artificial grass enables your customer to use and enjoy their garden all year round.”

DS Supplies Ltd also stocks accessories which work in conjunction with its artificial grass, such as shock pads, which it says are ideal for play surfaces, butyl and jointing tape, and fixing pins. Its artificial hedging provides a fast and effective solution to brighten up any area or to provide privacy, a company spokesperson said.

“Timber decking is one of the most popular and attractive features in Irish gardens; however, in wet, frost or icy conditions, it can be extremely dangerous, causing countless slips and falls each year. Our innovative anti-slip strip is designed by Retrofit. This profile fits into the existing grooves of your decking boards creating a discreet, safe anti-slip pathway.”

HYGEIA

The Hygeia group manufactures and markets a range of agricultural, veterinary and gardening products for both Irish and UK markets. The group says its mission is to create and market quality agrochemicals and home and garden products, each with its very own strong unique selling points and always at a competitive price to the Irish market. “Innovation, quality and excellence are the core attributes that Hygeia works to,” a company spokesperson said. “The company is constantly creating and developing new products to satisfy the consumer, while still caring for and improving the environment. Having succeeded at developing market-leading brands such as Mosgo, Hytrol and Green Force, Hygeia is now pleased to add the Goulding Garden Care brand to its portfolio.”

Hygeia has announced that it has been awarded exclusive distributorship to the Irish market of Sutton's Seeds, Pest-Stop and Johnsons Lawn Seed, adding that it is dedicated to manufacturing, blending and packing the highest-quality garden care products.

“Our sales force covers the entire country. Hygeia is proud to be selling Irish products and proud to be trusted by farmers and gardeners throughout the country for over 75 years.”



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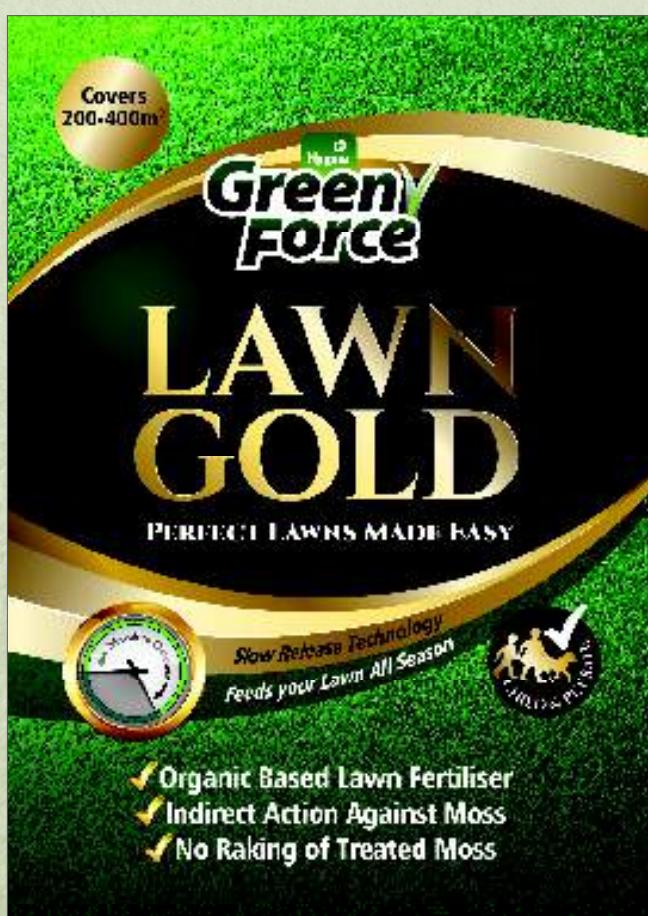
The new Bosch AFS 23-37 brush-cutter, distributed by Origo, is a garden tool for versatile cutting of overgrown areas. It features an interchangeable metal blade for cutting brambles and a 3.5mm extra-strong cutting line for cutting rough grass weeds and nettles.

"This Bosch brush-cutter is easy to use and convenient," a company spokesperson said. "Its 950-watt powerful motor delivers outstanding cutting performance while not compromising on control and comfort with an adjustable strap and handle. The innovative blade system on the new Bosch ART 23-10.8Li is up to 12 times longer-lasting than previous blades. The small yet powerful motor and a 10.8V/2 Ah battery allows for ease of use and manoeuvrability." Bosch says the ART 23-10.8Li is effortless to use, with a consistent quality of cut from an innovative durable cutting system, resulting in uninterrupted use and perfect results.

The new Bosch Rotak 43Li with Powerdrive+ motor with 36V/4.0Ah lithium-ion battery gives up to 90 minutes run time, suitable for lawns up to 500m² and no risk of cutting the cable.

The new Bosch AQT 33-11 electric pressure compact washer is a high-efficiency self-priming metal pump designed to provide more power and require less effort for effective cleaning.

The new Bosch Rotak 43Li with Powerdrive+ motor.

**RONSEAL**

"Gardening enthusiasts can perk up their pots, tackle their terracotta and freshen up their fences with Ronseal's colourful Garden Paint collection," according to the company. The wood-care specialists' range offers householders the chance to brighten up and weather-proof all kinds of outdoor spaces, garden accessories and furniture. Featuring a wide-ranging palette that can be used on wood, metal, terracotta, brick and stone, it includes everything from pretty neutrals like Sage and Slate to bold tones such as Purple Berry and Peacock.

"Whether you're planning a colour scheme or just cheering up an unloved bench, it's the perfect way to show your garden some love ready for the new year," according to Ronseal. "Application couldn't be easier. The range is rainproof within 60 minutes and touch dry in four hours – so you can get two coats done in a day." Ronseal Marketing Manager, Kate Sitch, said: "We're known for our long-lasting, high performance wood stains and the Ronseal Garden Paints range builds on this solid reputation. We know using colour is a great way to transform tired spaces so we're delighted to be able to offer such a broad, versatile range. We're looking forward to seeing it in action."



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Spring 2016

The new AFS 23-37 brushcutter has a combi cutting system making it easy to change between a metal blade and a weed line. For powerful, efficient cutting and clearing.

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WHELEHAN GARDENING

Whelehan Gardening, through its supply partner, The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, plans to bring new and innovative products to the Irish market this year.

A number of new products are set to be introduced. A new, improved, Miracle-Gro Rose and Shrub Plant Food range will be unveiled. The long-established granular formulation is being re-packaged and a new liquid formulation being added, the company has advised. Also this year, Roundup Optima will be launched. The company says this is Roundup's most effective product yet, offering better performance and value for money, treating 50% more weeds with the same pack size.

The Evergreen Grass Seed range will be launched on the Irish market this year. Included in the range will be Evergreen Fast Grass Lawn Seed. This product is designed to give consumers fast results by ensuring rapid germination.

In addition to TV advertising for Roundup and Evergreen, Whelehan Gardening will continue to support the existing brands in the portfolio in 2016, including Weedol, Pathclear, Evergreen Complete, Roseclear, Miracle-Gro, Patch Magic, Patio Magic, BugClear and more, with in-store promotions and media advertising.

RONSEAL®



Add colour across your whole garden

A WIDE RANGE OF COLOURS TO SUIT EVERYONE



SUITABLE FOR USE ON:
WOOD • BRICK • TERRACOTTA • METAL

Going with the grain of wood care

Wood care products not only offer economical solutions to homeowners looking to lengthen the lifespan of their timber home features, but they can also create a thriving market for retailers.

Decking, wooden sheds, post-and-rail fencing, floors – these are all firm favourites as fixtures in and around homes all over Ireland. But, prone to damage from weather and wear, it is important to ensure that these items are adequately protected or they will deteriorate beyond repair. According to wood protection experts, Cuprinol, research indicates that, on average, consumers will need to paint their outdoor decking approximately every two years. It is essential, therefore, that retailers have expert knowledge on the best products available for all the different woods used for various purposes. For example, softwoods such as spruce and pine are used in a lot of outdoor decking areas and fences and need to be treated with the correct product. There is a wide range of products available on the market, offering protection and aesthetic appeal. A number of these products and their benefits are outlined below.

LESS MESS

Cuprinol has launched an innovative new product called Less Mess Fence Care. This convenient product uses a gel-based formula, designed to reduce drip and mess. The product's special pigments will ensure rich, even coverage in just one quick-drying coat - always helpful when trying to stay ahead of the changeable Irish weather.

Less Mess Fence Care offers both colour and protection to fences, sheds and other rough-sawn garden wood, giving people a value-for-money solution without sacrificing ease of application.

The range is available in five natural shades including this year's colour of the year, Autumn Gold, as well as Autumn Red, Rich Oak, Rustic Brown and Woodland Green. They are available in 5L and 9L value tins.

Cuprinol is also updating its colour family with the 2016 interiors colour of the year. The golden hues of Honey Mango and Dazzling Yellow will join the Cuprinol Garden Shades family which means that customers can use the colour of the year both inside the house and outside.



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NON DRIP

Sadolin has developed a new product that it says is set to 'transform the application of woodstain'. Sadolin Non Drip Woodstain can deliver a perfect, durable finish with the easy-application process similar to other non-drip products, resulting in less mess.

Ideal for exterior joinery including doors, windows and conservatories, there's a choice of seven shades

including five wood tones and a ready-mixed pale grey and pale green. Kevin Whelan, Sadolin marketing manager, said: "We are really pleased to introduce a non-drip woodstain to the marketplace. This is a real advance in wood care technology. It's an innovative, high-quality product and there's nothing quite like it."

Available in a 2.5L tin, Sadolin Non Drip Woodstain requires three coats on bare wood, with the first coat acting as a base stain/primer, and two additional coats for redecoration projects. It is touch dry in just one to two hours and can be recoated in four to six hours, meaning that you could complete the job in a day.



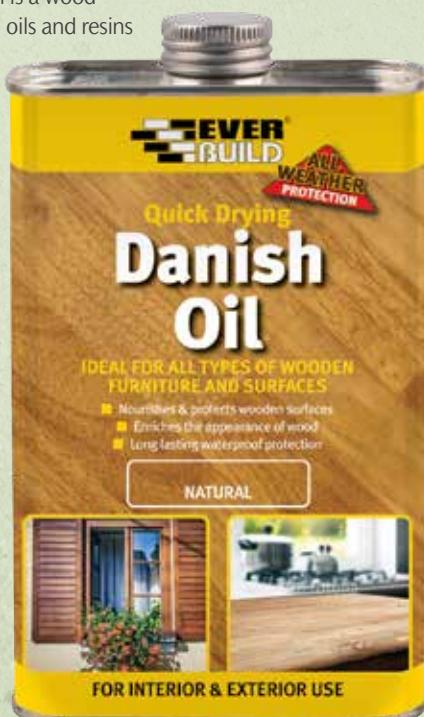
Sadolin's new offering, Non Drip Woodstain.

DANISH OIL

The Everbuild brand's popular Wood Care Range is constantly expanding, and now, thanks to the addition of Danish Oil, any type of wood can be restored, and protected against spills, stains and weathering. Danish Oil is a wood enhancing blend of natural oils and resins that penetrate, nourish and protect wood, providing a tough, long-lasting, waterproof finish that protects surfaces.

Danish Oil is quick-drying, penetrates deep into the grain and provides long-lasting protection to wood, restoring the natural oils and enriching its appearance. It gives a finish that is not glossy or slippery, making it the ideal product to use on tool handles.

Danish Oil is available in 500ml cans and can be used internally or externally on almost any wooden surface including furniture, doors, window frames and kitchen worktops.



Protect wood agains spills and stains with Everbuild's Danish Oil.

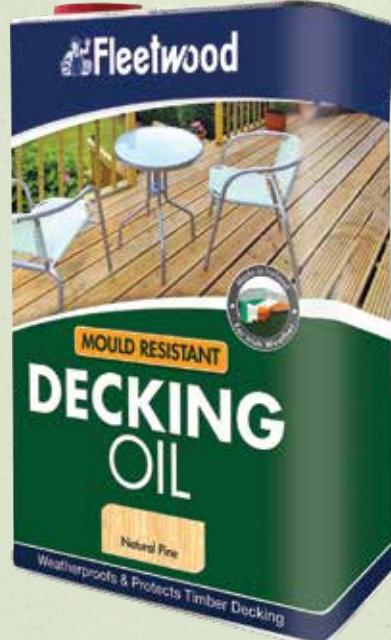
FINE FINISH

With spring just around the corner, home-owners' attention will soon be turning to those little jobs that need to be done in and around the house. Whether it's re-painting the banisters, giving that garden shed a sprucing up or tackling the decking, the Fleetwood complete wood care range caters for it all. Now is the perfect time of year to add that extra layer of protection to wood exposed to the elements over the winter. And when the correct stain and finish is used for a specific project, the results are certain to impress:

Teak Oil: For retaining the natural beauty of teak and other hardwoods. If used regularly Teak Oil will nourish, revive and feed the wood;

Decking Oil: Used to penetrate into wood to replace the natural oils and resins lost through weathering; and

Timberguard: Specially developed to colour and protect sheds, fences and other rough-sawn garden wood.



Fleetwood's Decking Oil and other wood protecting products are sure to impress.

WOOD PROTECTION

Larsen Wood Preservative is specially formulated to stop wet rot and dry rot. It kills wood-boring beetles and woodworm, and provides long-lasting protection from future attack. It is available in three colours: clear, green and brown. Larsen Wood Preservative is suitable for use on virtually all timber, internally and externally. A minimum of two coats should be applied to all surfaces, joints and end grains and is over-paintable.

Lardec, manufactured by Larsen, is a solvent-based, long-chain, alkyd wood stain and primer. It is ideal for use on all joinery components such as window frames, doors, garden sheds and garden furniture, poultry houses, etc. Lardec will not peel or flake and can be over-painted. It has excellent penetration and 'run off' properties and won't obscure the grain. Lardec is also available in a higher resin-solids version (Lardec 24) for improved performance.



Lardec is a solvent-based wood stain and primer.

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Advertisements (text plus logo) can be emailed to: hardware@ifpmedia.com
and be prepaid, at least two weeks prior to publication.

2016 Dates for your Diary

23rd February

HAI Training. Consultative Selling Skills for Suppliers, Citywest Hotel, Dublin

25th February

HAI Training. Consultative Selling Skills for Hardware Retailers and Merchants, Citywest Hotel, Dublin

1st March

HAI Training. Memorable Customer Service for Suppliers, Citywest Hotel, Dublin

3rd March

HAI Training. Memorable Customer Service for Hardware Retailers and Merchants, Citywest Hotel, Dublin

6th - 8th March

Eisenwaremesse – International Hardware Fair, Kolnmesse Messeplatz 1 Cologne

9th March

HAI Executive Committee Meeting

10th March

Solid Fuel Awareness Training, Metac Training, Mountrath, Co. Laois

6th - 7th April



Lyrath Estate Hotel, Co. Kilkenny

12th April

DCU Centre for Family Business Conference. Location TBC

13th April

Solid Fuel Awareness Training, Metac Training, Mountrath, Co. Laois

29th April

HAI Golf Society. HAI President Hugh O'Donnell's Prize sponsored by Crown Paints. Glasson Golf Club, Athlone

11th May

Solid Fuel Awareness Training, Metac Training, Mountrath, Co. Laois

25th May

HAI Executive Committee Meeting

27th May

HAI Golf Society. Denis Burke Memorial Cup sponsored by Bostik. Mount Juliet Golf Club, Kilkenny

8th June

Solid Fuel Awareness Training, Metac Training, Mountrath, Co. Laois

8th-9th June

Global DIY Summit. Waterfront Congress Centre, Stockholm

24th June

HAI Golf Society. Captain Hugh Taylor's Prize sponsored by Irish Abrasives. Old Conna Golf Club, Bray, Co. Wicklow



John O'Carroll, Head of Retail and Gillian Foley, Marketing Manager, Dairygold Co-Op Superstores

Digital Digest

Name: Gillian Foley
Position: Marketing Manager
Company: Dairygold Co-Op Superstores
Website: www.coopsuperstores.ie



CO-OP SUPERSTORES
www.coopsuperstores.ie

1. What was your main objective in developing an e-commerce website?

The main objective of launching our e-commerce website, www.coopsuperstores.ie, was to become the first omni-channel retailer in Ireland selling a comprehensive range of farm, home and garden products. We recognised the need for both click and brick in order to fulfil the demands of existing customers and to extend our offering to new customers from outside of our catchment area. Shoppers are now conditioned to expect a great omni-channel experience to include the same range of products and promotions available in store and online, easy in-store returns for products they purchased online etc. Creating an alliance between online and offline allows for greater brand awareness and increased product offerings to all our customers. All customers, both existing and new, now have access to the full Co-Op Superstores range.

2. How do you drive traffic to the website?

This is a combination of a number of activities: organic traffic is driven through focused SEO campaigns and blog posting. Referral traffic is driven by strategic outreach campaigns to continuously build quality backlinks to our site. We also engage in PPC advertising on an ongoing basis. Recently, we launched two social media platforms on both Facebook and Twitter to bolster our digital marketing initiatives. Sponsorships also form an important part of our marketing strategy.

3. What percentage of your annual sales comes through the website?

In 2015, e-commerce sales accounted for less than 5% of overall sales.

4. How do you intend to grow your online sales over the next 12 months?

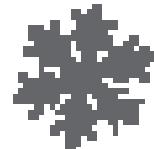
Over the next 12 months, we will continue to progress our SEO plan as we have found this to be a most cost-effective way of achieving sales growth long-term. In conjunction with this, we hope to achieve improved conversion rates by tweaking other elements such as PPC, the overall user journey and social media video production. Segmenting our online database and further developing our email marketing strategy is also a key area where we see sales growth potential. We also have the benefit for the first time of a full 12 months trading history to learn which categories perform well online and how we can develop these product groups further.

5. Given the entry of online-only traders into the Irish market and their recent advertising campaign, do you see it as a threat to hardware businesses in Ireland?

Yes, there is no doubt that any new entrant to the market presents a threat in particular to those who haven't yet embraced e-commerce. However, we are fortunate to have a strong customer base who trust in our business which has been in existence for over 100 years. One of our main points of difference from our competitors is our co-op structure and farming heritage which greatly enhances our customers perception of our online offering. We also have a considerable credit customer base who now have the option of shopping instore or online with us on credit. Again, we believe that we are better placed to serve the needs of customers by operating both online and offline – this is what customers these days expect! According to John O'Carroll, Head of Retail at Dairygold, online sales are not solely driven by price, customers also need to have confidence in the brand. Seeing Co-Op Superstores as part of the Dairygold brand gives new customers the confidence and re-assurance to shop with us.

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