

MAY/JUNE 2014

THE HAI HARDWARE JOURNAL

THE VOICE OF THE IRISH HARDWARE INDUSTRY



READY TO BLOOM?
HARDWARE SECTOR ALL SET FOR SUMMER

ALSO INSIDE: MCMAHONS RETURN TO DUBLIN

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COVER PIC: Woodie's garden was a big hit with visitors to the Bloom Festival in the Phoenix Park, Dublin on the June Bank Holiday weekend.

COVER STORY

GARDENING SECTOR SET FOR BUSY PERIOD

This is the time of year when gardening activity really gets going. Our Gardening Correspondent Joseph Blair reports on the latest news from this busy sector

DEAR READER,

Most builder's merchants/ builder's providers view the summer season as crucial in determining their businesses overall performance for the year. While we can't do anything to control the weather, the best retailers are doing their utmost to manage those elements of the business they can control, to maximise sales over the next few months. Gardening products have an important role to play at this time of the year and our Gardening Correspondent, Joseph Blair has plenty of news and events to inspire some marketing and promotions ideas for you on page 26. Talk of gardens inevitably brings up the topic of decking maintenance and related issues. There's a wide range of new products in coatings coming onstream for the summer and our review highlights some of the most interesting (page 34). From green fingers to green awareness, we take a look at the changing nature of the Irish consumer and the impact that energy efficiency and sustainability are having on the Irish public's purchasing decisions (page 30). Finally, this edition's View From Abroad takes a look at what's happening with our closest neighbours. John Newcomb, Managing Director of the Builders Merchants Federation in the UK provides some insights into trends across the Irish Sea (page 23).

FEATURES

17 MCMAHONS CONCEPT CLICKS WITH DUBLIN MARKET

A profile of McMahon's Builders Warehouse, the newest branch in the McMahon's Group.

29 TAKING STOCK

Improving customer service while reducing stocks.

30 GREEN LIGHT FOR HARDWARE SHOPPERS

Are consumers buying 'green'?

34 ALL DECKED OUT FOR SUMMER

The HAI Hardware Journal talks to some of the leading companies in the decking coatings and accessories market.

38 TIMBER SECTOR RAISES THE BAR

There is a sense of optimism around the hardware industry currently and the timber sector reflects that positive mood.

REGULARS

41 NEWS & PRODUCTS

Almost €2m in sales at United Hardware trade show. Grafton Group upbeat on trading in early 2014. Kilsaran celebrates 50 years.

14 HAI CLIPBOARD

HAI Annual Survey 2014. CSO Retail Index. Submission on key cutting regulation.

21 HR UPDATE

Annual leave – some useful management tips.

23 VIEW FROM ABROAD

Trends look positive across the Irish Sea.

39 TECH TALK

A prescription for point of sale materials in hardware stores?

41 ANOTHER SIDE OF...

Padraic Rogers, Managing Director of Rogers Topline, Ballymote, Co Sligo, is widely known outside the business for his work in amateur drama.

42 HAI GOLF

The 2014 season got off to a successful start with two well-attended golf outings in Athy and Limerick.



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ISSN 2009-5481

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Published by:
IFP Media
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HOME RENOVATION SCHEME SHOWS SLOW BENEFIT OUTSIDE DUBLIN

A new survey of the membership of leading Irish hardware group, Associated Hardware, has revealed that 80 per cent of its members do not believe that the Government's current Home Renovation Tax Incentive Scheme has impacted positively on trading within their businesses. The new survey, launched today by Associated Hardware, which represents over 40 Homevalue retailers nationwide, has indicated that despite the recent announcement by the Revenue Commissioners that as a result of the Home Renovation Tax Incentive Scheme over 4,600 contracts with a value in excess of €80m had been registered, many hardware retailers believe the scheme has not yet been successful in providing stimulus to the sector nationwide. Commenting on the findings, Paul Thompson, CEO, Associated Hardware said: "Although we welcome the scheme implemented by the Government, we do feel that it has a lot more to offer throughout the country, particularly outside of the greater Dublin region." The survey also found that 90 percent of respondents believe simplifying the application process would increase the attractiveness of the scheme. 85 percent of respondents felt that improved awareness through increased publicity would positively impact uptake of the scheme. Almost three quarters of respondents (73 percent) also believed that lowering the eligibility rate would be a constructive development. "There is clear consensus that more needs to be done with the current scheme to stimulate greater uptake. There is no doubt that increased advertising of the scheme and simplifying of the application process would have a positive effect nationally," Paul added. In what can be interpreted as a positive indication of recovery for the sector, the survey also found that 68 percent of Associated Hardware retailers are more optimistic regarding the future of their businesses compared to the same period last year. For more on Home Renovation Scheme see p.14.



Kilsaran's showroom building and display gardens. Co. Meath.

KILSARAN CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Founded in 1964 by the late Patrick McKeown in the village of Kilsaran in County Louth, Kilsaran International says it has grown considerably to become Ireland's largest independent maker of concrete products.

This family-owned and run business is, literally, Irish from the ground up, mining raw materials from its own quarries to make paving and walling, road surfacing materials, pre-mixed mortars, renders, screeds and, of course, ready-mixed concrete and blocks at its own manufacturing facilities across Leinster.

The company has been a supplier to many of the country's landmark construction projects including the Aviva Stadium, T2 at Dublin Airport and the Convention Centre, Dublin. In recent years, the company has

re-branded in order to reflect its diverse product range and to build on its growing exports to the UK. Kilsaran International has become the over-arching name of the group while the sub-brand structure has created a platform to engage the company's various target audiences:

- ▶ Kilsaran Build is the brand that focuses on the professionals that use the company's products to physically build, i.e., building contractors, landscapers, paving installers, plasterers, fencing contractors, block layers etc;
- ▶ Kilsaran Create is the brand that communicates the company's product portfolio to architects, landscape architects, designers and specifiers; and,
- ▶ Kilsaran Home, is the company's consumer brand.

DS Supplies Ltd have announced that they will distribute the Nicoline brand in Ireland. Nicoline is a long-established family run business incorporated in 1977. The Nicoline brand is well recognised in all leading DIY retailers nationwide and overseas. The range includes Cork Floor and Wall Tiles, Parquet Floor Tiles, Real Wood Solid Plank Flooring, Solid Bamboo Flooring and Notice Boards along with a range of other Cork products including Bath Mats and Tableware. A sample of the floor tile is pictured.





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** Dulux EasyCare washable matt is 50 times tougher than Dulux Vinyl Matt 2013.

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CRH SEES PICK UP IN CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY IN IRELAND

CRH in Ireland is seeing a pick-up in construction activity, and its volumes to date are c. 10 per cent ahead of a very weak 2013, according to the leading building materials group. CRH plc has reported that, like-for-like, January-April sales in Europe are up 10 per cent compared with a weather-impacted 2013. Like-for-like sales in the low-season first four months in the Americas are 2 per cent ahead of 2013 despite weather disruptions across many regions in the United States and construction demand remains good, according to the company. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) for the building materials group overall in the seasonally less significant first half is expected to be €0.1bn higher than last year at €0.5 bn (2013: €397m). CRH says it is on track to deliver incremental savings of €100m in 2014, primarily in Europe.

In Europe, the good start to the year in much more favourable weather conditions is encouraging, CRH says. While the group continues to expect second-half

performance in Europe to be ahead of last year, it believes that the strong year-to-date rate of organic growth is likely to moderate in the second half. In Ukraine, CRH has seen limited impact on trading to date from the political unrest, but the outlook remains uncertain. The improving trend evident in the second half of last year in Europe has continued in 2014, CRH notes. This, combined with the stabilising economic backdrop and the absence of the prolonged winter conditions which impacted last year's early season trading, benefited construction activity in most of CRH's markets. Cumulative like for like European sales to end April were 10 per cent ahead of the first four months of 2013. Overall, the second half of 2013 benefited from favourable weather patterns. Against this backdrop, and assuming no major financial or energy market dislocations, with the benefit of contributions from acquisitions and cost savings measures, CRH expects second-half Group EBITDA to be somewhat ahead of last year (H2 2013: €1.08bn).



The Ombre look creates a layered and tonal effect.

REVITALIZE THE SUMMER WITH CROWN PAINTS

With the promise of brighter and warmer days, thoughts turn to rejuvenating homes to keep up with the seasons and Crown Paints have some insights into the trends that will dominate the market over the next few months. Crown Paints Spring Summer 2014 trends identify some looks that could provide the perfect inspiration to help your customers bring a sense of the outdoors inside their homes, the company states. Three key themes highlighted by Crown are:

- ▶ Ombre – it has been evident in fashion and hair trends, but now this look is hitting people's homes as well. Ombre pairs complementing gradient shades together to create a stylish layered and tonal effect. Greens, turquoises and deep blue tones feature strongly.
- ▶ Edit – elegant and striking, this trend draws inspiration from the simplicity of Japanese design by bringing together strong colours to complement chic interiors. Deep, rich crimsons partnered with mellow, sandy tones create a peaceful and tranquil atmosphere.
- ▶ Unexpected – Contrasting colours and textures is key for this trend. Soft pastels paired with edgy design statements create a striking overall impression. Blues, greys and corals are the building blocks for this contemporary look.



The MyRoomPainter App is available free from the App Store or Google Play.

MYROOMPAINTER APP

For anyone interested in exploring the spring/summer trends or just generally interested in checking out new colour options, the MyRoomPainter app is the ideal way to get creative, according to Crown. This innovative app is the "ultimate tool" for both DIY and professional decorating, the company states, and is available on iPhone and Android. The app enables you to visualise how your own rooms or exteriors would look with a fresh coat of Crown, Sandtex or Sadolin paint products. The Search & Match feature can be used to find colour inspiration from your own photographs or to seek out colours to complement your furnishings or accessories. Offering complementary and tonal suggestions, MyRoomPainter makes it easy to experiment with hundreds of colour variations. It also allows multiple colour schemes to be saved for comparison or for sharing with friends and family to help you make that perfect colour decision. Other features include helpful hints and tips videos, FAQs and links to useful websites. You can also Contact the Crown Team for advice or assistance. With its paint calculator, full product range listing and GPS stockist finder, Crown Paints is confident the app has everything you need to plan your project at your fingertips.

Pictured at the trade show were: James Kean, National Hardware; Paul Thompson, CEO, Associated Hardware; Padraic Glynn, Chairman, Associated Hardware; and John Stone, CEO, National Hardware.

ALMOST €2M IN SALES AT UNITED HARDWARE TRADE SHOW

Over 80 Irish and international suppliers generated almost €2m in sales as they showcased thousands of products at the annual United Hardware trade show held in the Citywest Hotel in Dublin. United Hardware Ltd represents more than 120 independent home and garden retailers and builders' merchants who make up the membership of Associated Hardware Plc and National Hardware Limited and who, together, have a combined turnover in excess of €300m. These members employ over 1,600 people in the 26 counties. John Stone, CEO, National Hardware Limited, said: "We're very pleased with the success of this year's trade show which demonstrates that, despite the challenging environment, the hardware sector is gradually stabilising and in some areas showing signs of recovery.

Paul Thompson, CEO Associated Hardware Plc said: "The trade show is an important platform to stimulate sales for suppliers, and for our merchants to prepare themselves for what we believe will be a buoyant summer in terms of DIY, home improvement and construction activity.

"Our members, being heavily reliant on activity in home improvements and construction, will be hoping that recent budget measures and urban housing demand will help bring much needed stimulus back into the sector."

Suppliers at the trade show included familiar household names in market segments such as tools, paint, homeware, gardening, timber, building materials, plumbing and heating.

Robert Massey, Director of Sales and Marketing at Bostik Ireland, said: "The trade show was a resounding success for suppliers, largely driven by the positive energy, optimism, and genuine engagement demonstrated by suppliers, members and key decision makers from Associated Hardware and National Hardware."

United Hardware Ltd is a leading representative group in Ireland and a market leader in sourcing and purchasing products for its merchants. Formed as a joint venture between National Hardware Ltd (NHL) and Associated Hardware Plc (AHL), United Hardware Ltd operates from a 7,897 sq. metre, AHL-owned, purpose-built warehouse on the outskirts of Dublin. The objective of this joint venture buying group is to offer its members greater purchasing power, more substantial discounts and a more streamlined purchasing process.



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US HARDWARE STORES OFFER CONTRACTOR INSTALLATION PROGRAMMES

Consumers buying recessed lights, a faucet or rhododendrons can now walk away with the name of a neighbourhood electrician, plumber or landscaper before they leave the store. Both Lowe's and Home Depot offer contractor installation programmes. Each offers subcontractors on a range of 25 to 50 projects such as water heater replacement. Menards has a more informal programme where it displays a few dozen contractors' business cards. Now Lowe's has gone a step further by partnering with home improvement startup Porch.com to provide consumer access to 1.5 million professionals and 100 million projects around the country in all of its 1,700 stores. "It's a combination of Angie's List (www.angieslist.com provides reviews of local service providers, such as

roofers, plumbers, mechanics, dentists etc), review sites and Pinterest," said Matt Ehrlichman, CEO of Porch.com, "a LinkedIn for the home." Consumers are wanting more from hardware stores than just supplies and tools. They expect do-it-yourself help in the form of videos, online tutorials, in-house seminars and one-on-one assistance from a sales clerk. But if they get in over their heads and the project is best left to a pro, they often look to a hardware store, big or small. These kinds of referral systems are a step up from the Yellow Pages, said Dave Brennan, co-director of the University of St. Thomas Institute for Retailing Excellence. "The consumer gets to see how long the company has been in business, a little bit about it, and any recommendations from previous customers." Porch.com attempts to help businesses and consumers connect on a bigger scale. Hardware stores generate significant business from contractors, and referrals are an easy way to add sales. It's free for any business to create a profile and upload pictures of past projects. Consumers can look for service providers in their neighbourhood, photos of past work and average pricing, licensing and credentials.

60 SECOND INTERVIEW

SEAN MCGUINNESS



Sean is MD of Albany Home Decor Specialists, Castlebar.

ARE YOU AN OPTIMIST?

YES.

BUSINESS LEADER YOU MOST ADMIRE?

DONALD TRUMP

BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED IN BUSINESS?

ALWAYS BE AHEAD OF YOUR COMPETITION.

BEST BUSINESS BOOK THAT YOU HAVE READ?

'THE HUNGER' BY SEAN KELLY.

ADVICE TO ENTREPRENEURS STARTING OUT?

ALWAYS DO YOUR RESEARCH AND KNOW YOUR BUSINESS.

WHO OR WHAT HAS HELPED YOU THE MOST?

MY FATHER.

WHAT TYPE OF PHONE DO YOU HAVE?

A NOKIA.

TABLET OR LAPTOP?

LAPTOP.

FAVOURITE PASTIME?

CYCLING.

FAVOURITE MOVIE?

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER.

FAVOURITE PART OF THE WORLD (OTHER THAN IRELAND)?

THE SOUTH OF SPAIN.

GREATEST REGRET?

NOT DELEGATING ENOUGH.

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY RISES SHARPLY AGAIN

The recovery in the Irish construction sector continued in May, according to the Ulster Bank Construction Purchasing Managers' Index. Although rates of expansion in activity, new orders and employment all eased from the highs seen in the previous month, they remained strong and companies were again optimistic regarding growth over the coming year. A marked acceleration in the rate of input cost inflation was recorded as suppliers took advantage of improved demand for inputs to raise their charges. Activity has now risen in each of the past nine months, with the latest expansion linked to higher workloads and improving confidence.

Commenting on the survey, Simon Barry, Chief Economist Republic of Ireland at Ulster Bank, noted: "The recovery continued to be centred on housing and commercial activity, with both areas posting substantial rises again. However, there was some welcome news with regards to civil engineering activity, which decreased at the slowest pace since the end of 2007. "The rate of growth in new orders also remained sharp despite easing from the previous month. Companies reported success in securing contracts for work both in Ireland and abroad and were confident that these trends would continue over the coming year, leading to further growth of activity during the next 12 months."

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MAM SOFTWARE AND RNH SOLUTIONS REPORT A SUCCESSFUL INFODAY

MAM Software and RNH Solutions report a very successful InfoDay, which was held at the Red Cow Moran Hotel, Dublin recently. The free event, which was attended by existing and prospective customers, was held to demonstrate how technological advancements can help companies drive business performance. Supplier partners who collaborate with MAM and RNH were also present so that attendees could get a full insight into the MAM/RNH product offering. A variety of innovative products were showcased during the event, including a tablet app which helps businesses to boost field sales, warehouse management

tools and B2B and B2C e-commerce solutions that facilitate online trade. There was a high level of interest in cloud solutions, which give businesses the chance to compete with leading organisations in terms of technology and IT infrastructure. Cloud-hosted products are deployed via remote servers in a state-of-the-art data centre, which allows businesses to utilise the expertise of trained IT maintenance experts. Cloud-hosting also offers the benefits of flexible monthly payments, remote data backups and automatic software updates. Aside from MAM and RNH, exhibiting companies included eBay, Claranet, PACT, Motorcheck,

and Origin. These companies work in partnership with MAM and RNH to produce products such as e-commerce, connectivity and data solutions.

"We're delighted with the success of our InfoDay and we've received some very positive feedback from the attendees, as well as our partner exhibitors," said Michael Forrest, Managing Director at RNH Solutions. "The event proved to be very popular and attendees were pleased with the new developments that we demonstrated. We're expecting to be very busy over the coming weeks following the feedback we've received."

GRAFTON GROUP UPBEAT ON TRADING IN EARLY 2014

The Grafton Group plc, the builders merchanting and DIY Group with operations in Ireland, the UK and Belgium, has reported positive trading in the first four months of the year with a strong start to the year measured against weak comparatives for the same period last year which was affected by adverse weather conditions. Demand in the Group's markets has generally improved, supported by evidence of a continuing recovery in both the Irish and UK economies. Group revenue for the four months to April 30, 2014 increased by 13.5 per cent to £654m (four months to April 2013: £576m).

Gavin Slark, Chief Executive Officer of Grafton Group plc commented: "We have had a positive start to the year against weak comparables from 2013. We are encouraged by the

economic recovery and the continuing improvement in our principal markets and we look forward to building on the progress to date through volume growth in our markets, internal initiatives and an ongoing focus on efficiencies." The recovery in the Irish Merchanting business gathered pace from the very low levels of the downturn with evidence of a pick-up in activity in both the new housing and repair, maintenance and improvement (RMI) markets. Improved demand was driven by the ongoing economic recovery including improving trends in the labour market, a more broadly based geographic recovery in the merchanting market and housing supply shortages in the greater Dublin area. The DIY retailing business in Ireland (7 per cent of group revenue) had a positive start to the year due to stronger

demand for seasonal products relative to the same period in 2013. Despite the sustained improvement in consumer sentiment, the recovery in core Irish retail sales has been modest due to continuing pressure on disposable incomes. The UK merchanting business, which accounts for three quarters of Group revenue, recovered from the weather-related set-back to trading in the first four months of 2013 and also benefitted from growth in the RMI market, that was driven by increased housing transactions, and a recovery in the new build housing market. Selco performed particularly strongly in the traditionally quieter early months of the year, continuing to build on the significant progress made in recent years in developing its market position particularly in the Greater London Area where 20 of its 34 branches are located.



NEW KEY ACCOUNTS MANAGER FOR FLEETWOOD PAINTS

Fleetwood Paints is delighted to announce the appointment of Paul Byrne to the newly created role of Key Accounts Manager. Paul is joining the business having spent many years carrying out a similar role for Nestle Ireland.

Commenting on the appointment, Fleetwood's managing director Conor Doyle said: "Paul brings a wealth of experience with him and we look forward to him playing an important role in building on our existing joint business plans with our key retailers and seeing both Fleetwood Paints and Sundries ranges growing strongly again this year."

Elmer Kerr shares his tips on enhancing turnover and profit. Elmer is Sales & Marketing Director of PMM, Ireland's leading merchandising & retail marketing consultants. Elmer is currently leading The Beacon Initiative, a retailer development programme in County Cork. You can contact Elmer at 071 911 8811 or by email: elmer@pmms.ie

SPECIAL OFFERS DISPLAYED ON POINT-OF-SALE INCREASE SALES!

The latest research shows that 90 per cent of Irish shoppers immediately notice special offers on point of sale (POS) displays in-store. Over 70 per cent of shoppers considered the products advertised on POS to be less expensive to buy than other similar stocks. Almost three quarters (73 per cent) surveyed said that they like finding out about new products while they are shopping (females 78 per cent and males 68 per cent). These findings were predominantly driven by younger shoppers (Mid-20s to Mid 30s). Over half (56 per cent) said they are more likely to buy a product if it stands out in-store. Shoppers over the age of 45 years were less likely to be driven by point-of-sale displays and even more so in the older (pensioners) sector. Dublin shoppers (60 per cent+) are more likely to buy special offers displayed on POS than their counterparts (only 50 per cent) outside the capital.

THREE KEY STEPS

1. Decide what products should be displayed on "special offer" every week in-store and alternate stock week-on-week. Vary your offers!
Remember "special offers" do *not* have to be dramatically reduced in price to attract shopper's attention! Use wording



ELMER'S ESSENTIALS RETAILING TIPS

such as "great value", "offer of the week", "buy today at this price", and "limited stock"

2. Merchants should complete a review of their "special offers" displayed in-store every week and measure sales against the products.
3. Appoint two staff to be responsible for "special offers" every week! Let them suggest what stock should be prioritised and take action!

Point-of-sale (POS) material in-store is the cheapest form of advertising that any retailer can use every day of the week and it increases shopper spend in-store. It pays to advertise in-store in the same way as it is necessary to advertise out-of-store, although in-store advertising cost much less!

HAPPY 25TH, PMM

Congratulations to Elmer as this year his company, PMM Group, the Professional Merchandising & Marketing Services company celebrates its 25th anniversary. One of Ireland's leading companies with vast experience & expertise in the full range of retail services, PMM employs and manages 160+ fully-trained and supervised

Merchandisers strategically located in every town, city district and county throughout Ireland. PMM teams use the most advanced "real-time" field reporting system including report uploads and digital photography. PMM Merchandisers operate weekly in retail stores throughout Ireland including Tesco Ireland, Dunnes, SuperValu, Centra,

Gala, Topaz, Super Quinn, Easons, M&S, Independent Newsagents, Pharmacies, Woodies DIY Stores and all major bank branches. PMM offers competitive pricing plans for clients across all retail sectors, including national audits, mystery shop programmes and competitor activity and analysis.

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The Hardware Show 2015 is an event organised by the industry for the industry. Its organisation is being driven by an influential and informed trade show committee, which has already begun planning on making THE HARDWARE SHOW 2015 an unmissable event for both merchants and suppliers.

BOOK YOUR STAND

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SHOW 2015
HOME - GARDEN - BUILD - DIY

TOP SECURITY FIRM CONFIRMS SPONSORSHIP

Hardware Association Ireland is delighted to announce Netwatch Ireland as premier sponsor of The Hardware Show 2015

The announcement of Netwatch's sponsorship coincides with the news that a further 25 per cent of exhibition space has been added. This ensures that The Hardware Show 2015 will be the biggest must-see event in the Industry calendar with 82 per cent of original stand space already sold. The show will take place at the Conference & Event Centre, Citywest Hotel, Co Dublin on February 15 and 16, 2015.

The biennial Hardware Show is the sector's largest networking, learning and promotional platform. It is a showcase for innovation and new product launches and a perfect opportunity to meet new and existing customers. David Walsh, Group CEO of Netwatch, Europe's largest remote visual monitoring company, commented: "At Netwatch, we pride ourselves on providing security and peace-of-mind to our customers both in Ireland and across the globe. Putting our name to an event like The Hardware Show 2015, which also has a reputation for excellence and innovation, makes for a perfect fit and we are looking forward to both meeting and supporting the industry leaders in the hardware field." He noted: "With the increase in the number of thefts of valuable material and break-ins in the hardware industry each year, ensuring your business is secure is becoming more vital than ever. Netwatch protects the properties of numerous exhibiting members and attendees of The Hardware Show and we are delighted to support them through our involvement in a show of such calibre and significance to the Hardware Industry." Paddy Kelly, President of Hardware Association Ireland said: "We are absolutely delighted to have Netwatch on board as our main sponsor. Their reputation for innovation, quality and reliability is an ideal match for the show and I hope this is a partnership that will continue for some time. Indeed, industry suppliers have clearly recognised the value of the show

as the ideal platform for showcasing their products and the perfect place to reach merchants. This has been demonstrated by the overwhelming advance booking of stand space culminating in an extension of the show size. The Hardware Show 2015 is on target to be our best yet." With 82 per cent of stand space already booked some of the major Industry brands have already confirmed their space including: Amalgamated Hardware Plc., Ames True Temper Ltd., Aquasource Distributors Ltd., Arc Building Products, Ashtown Trading, Bord na Móna, Bostik Industries, Calor Gas, Canadia Distributors Ltd., CCEC, Centurion Europe Ltd., Classic Hardware, Contech, Crown Paints, Curust Industries, Dargan John & Sons Ltd., Donal Lynch Hardware, Dosco, Draper Tools, DS Supplies, Dulux, Duracell, Ecocem Ireland, Everbuild, Fleetwood Paints, Galco Steel, Hamble Distribution, IITC, Intact Software, Irish Cement, Irish Wire Products, Henkel, JB Key, John Murphy Castlereagh, John Stafford & Sons (Dublin) Ltd., Keystone Group, Kilsaran, Laydex, Larsen Building Products, Mercer Agencies, N and C Enterprises, NIKO, Olympic Fixings, Rawplug, Regatta Professional, Rhino Distributors, RNH - Retail Distribution Systems, Ronseal, Saint Gobain, Sasta Hardware, Snickers, Tegral, TIMCO, Tucks Fasteners, Tucks O'Brien, TW Clarke, United Hardware, Uppercross Enterprises Ltd., Varian L S & Co. Ltd., Westaro Hosing, Whiteriver Group and Xtratherm. There will be four key streams to the show: Home; Garden; Build; and DIY. The organisers say there will be no better place to find out about the latest products and services on the market for each of these sectors than at the official HAI show.

The Hardware Show 2015 is an event organised by the Industry for the Industry. Its organisation is being driven by an influential and informed trade show committee, which has been busy working to ensure that The Hardware Show is an unmissable event for both merchants and suppliers. The show also coincides with Hardware Association Ireland's premier social event, the HAI President's Ball. This is a great opportunity to meet and greet old friends and new, in an informal, social setting, and it is always a very enjoyable occasion for everyone associated with the industry and their partners, both merchants and suppliers.



Hugh O'Donnell, Chief Executive, Amalgamated Hardware plc and Vice President, Hardware Association Ireland; David Walsh, Group CEO, Netwatch; and Kieran Burke, Purchasing Director, Grafton Merchants ROI Ltd, at the announcement of Netwatch as premier sponsor of The Hardware Show 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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HAI ANNUAL SURVEY 2014

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUES FACING US

As part of Hardware Association Ireland strategy for 2014/2015, we will be continuing our programme of research introduced last year among our retail members. The primary aim of this research is to offer our members valuable market intelligence that will help them benchmark their business against industry peers.

The 2014 annual member survey will take place in June and will provide a vital comparison on member sentiment compared to our initial survey in June of 2013.

This survey will be accompanied by one-to-one meetings, where appropriate, with Jim Copeland, which will be held throughout the year.

HAI would like to thank members in advance for their active participation in this research programme, which will be extremely valuable to all HAI members in providing industry intelligence. This data is vital if we are to increase awareness and recognition of the issues facing our industry today in discussions with Government and key decision makers.

HOME RENOVATION SCHEME

Revenue has confirmed that, as a result of the Home Renovation Tax Incentive Scheme introduced on foot of calls from Hardware Association Ireland at the end of last year, over 5,493 contracts in respect of 4,484 properties with a value in excess of €93m have been entered as at June 5, 2014.

These first positive figures are welcome for our industry, which has suffered significantly during the last number of years. However, indications from Revenue are that the scheme's take-up to date has been concentrated in the greater Dublin area and less in rural Ireland, a trend which seems to be borne out by the experience of HAI members. So, while we hope they signal the start of an upward trend, caution still prevails in relation to the figures. In the meantime, Revenue continues to actively promote the Home Renovation Tax Incentive Scheme and members are also encouraged to promote to both customers and contractors the opportunity the scheme offers.

Home-owners who had qualifying work carried out and paid for between October 25, 2013 and April 10, 2014 need to get their contractor to enter their details online using the property owner's LPT property ID as soon as possible. For works carried out and paid for from April 11, 2014, home owners should give their contractor their property ID but not their PPS number or PIN. If the contractor is not a HRI qualifying contractor, he or she won't be able to enter the work details onto HRI online. Revenue insists that it's really important to check that the works details are entered onto HRI online before work starts. This is how the home owner will know if the contractor is tax-compliant for HRI purposes. The home owner will not be able to claim the HRI tax credit if the contractor doesn't qualify for the HRI and hasn't entered the works and payment details onto HRI online. Revenue say that the online system is very simple for contractors to use and for homeowners to check online. Further information is available from www.revenue.ie



Hardware, paints and glass sales are on an upward curve, according to CSO figures.

CSO RETAIL

The latest Retail Sales Index from the CSO just published is reporting an increase in month-on-month volume for hardware of 3.3 per cent, the second highest performing category for April (for more information, see www.cso.ie). The sectors with the largest month-on-month volume increases were:

- ▶ furniture and lighting (+6.4 per cent);
 - ▶ hardware, paints and glass (+3.3 per cent); and,
 - ▶ food, beverages and tobacco (+2.4 per cent).
- The sectors with the largest monthly decreases were:
- ▶ motor trades (-3.8 per cent);
 - ▶ pharmaceuticals, medical and cosmetic articles (-2.2 per cent); and,
 - ▶ books, newspapers and stationery (-1.5 per cent).

TOP 5 WORKS BY VALUE

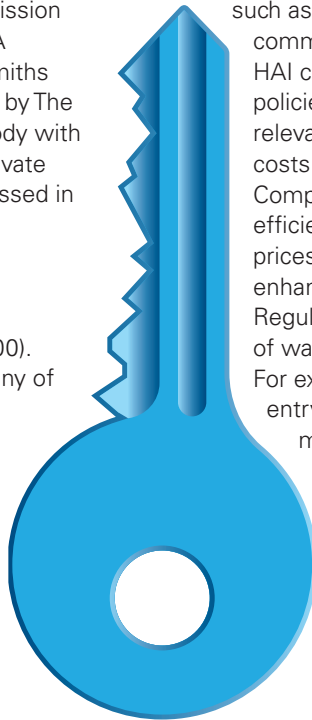
Home Extension	35%
General Repairs & Renovations	23%
Window Replacement	13%
Kitchen Renovations	9%
Bathroom/Shower/En Suite Improvements	4%
Average Value for Top 5	€19,500

HAI MAKES SUBMISSION ON KEY CUTTING REGULATION

Hardware Association Ireland has made a submission to the public consultation on A Standard for PSA Licensing – Future Requirements for the Locksmiths and Suppliers and Installers of Safes conducted by The Private Security Authority, PSA, the statutory body with responsibility for licensing and regulating the private security industry in Ireland. HAI concerns expressed in the submission include:

- ▶ cutting car keys;
- ▶ cutting safe keys;
- ▶ cutting keys to code; and,
- ▶ selling any safe (with a cash rating over €2000).
- ▶ Under the proposed licensing, to engage in any of the above-mentioned activities you must:
 - 1) be a registered locksmith;
 - 2) comply with a raft of regulations;
 - 3) pay €1000 'admin. fee'; and
 - 4) pay between €125-€1,250 annually.

HAI has called for a Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) on these proposals and believes that it is important that the regulations produced by regulatory bodies



such as the PSA have regard to the Government's wider commitments to better regulation.

HAI considers it is essential that best practice policies are developed, having regard to all relevant impacts, to assist in identifying the costs and benefits of proposed regulations.

Competition in this sector allows for innovation and efficiency among businesses; contributes to lower prices of goods and services for consumers; and enhances overall national competitiveness.

Regulation can impact on competition in a number of ways.

For example, regulations can create barriers to entry such as limiting the number of suppliers in a market. They can restrict the supply of certain services. Hardware Association Ireland will follow up with the PSA to represent members' interests and will ask for members' support in working with local and national politicians, as appropriate, to impress upon them the significance and potentially negative impact of this proposed licensing initiative.

HAI CONTINUES TO FIGHT SHADOW ECONOMY

Hardware Association Ireland continues its efforts to support members in tackling the issue of the shadow economy through its work with The Hidden Economy Monitoring Group (HEMG). A non-statutory multi-agency group, HEMG involves business representative bodies, trade unions and state agencies responsible for taxation and duties, social welfare and employment rights, all with the common goal of reducing shadow economy activity. A main focus for the Group is to provide a forum for the exchange of views on the effectiveness of measures used in combating hidden economy activity. Shadow economy

activity covers all activity where legal obligations around taxes and duties, PRSI, and employment are not met.

This activity, by its nature, impacts negatively on competitiveness, jobs and the long term sustainability of compliant businesses as well as reducing the State's tax and duty revenues. For 2014, HEMG will explore a range of areas to enhance compliance with legal obligations and to reduce shadow economy activity. For example, HEMG will explore the merits of consumer protection awareness of the downsides of engaging shadow economy operators or purchasing goods

from shadow economy operators.

HEMG will also seek to have input into the proposed statutory Register of Builders, which is due to come into force in 2015.

Another focus will be the merits of using 'plain English' guides to better explain some legal obligations of businesses in the hope that this will influence compliance with legal obligations.

Hardware Association Ireland believes that the work of HEMG will be of significant benefit to members, in particular as regards working towards the sustainability of compliant businesses, and will continue to play an active role within the group.

MEMBER UPDATE : HAI LENDS ITS VOICE TO RETAIL FORUM

Hardware Association Ireland (HAI) joined a select group of participants in the newly established Retail Consultation Forum in Dublin Castle recently. The Forum was set up by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation as part of the Action Plan for Jobs 2014 to provide structured engagement between Government and the retail sector.

It will address issues that impact on cost competitiveness in the sector and seek to introduce a number of structural measures that will support the retail sector. Representing the interests of hardware merchants and retailers, HAI presented the inaugural meeting with a number of issues for consideration and is

pleased to report that key areas of HAI policy are now on the Forum's agenda. These include incentives to encourage purchase in the form of the promotion and extension of the Home Renovation Tax Incentive Scheme and other initiatives, as well as the introduction of a voucher scheme for the solid fuel allowance. The next meeting is scheduled for September.

DEMAND GROWS FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION ON UPWARD-ONLY RENTS



Hardware Association Ireland has joined with a group of almost a dozen other trade representative associations from industry, business, retail and the commercial sector to insist on action by the Government to end upward-only rent reviews.

This group, which represents thousands of retailers, small and medium-sized businesses employing tens of thousands of people, is saying to Government that it can no longer prevaricate and hide behind legal advice, a response which has had the effect of devastating shops and commercial outlets across towns and cities around the country. The group wants legislation tabled by Independent

Senator Feargal Quinn, and recently passed in the Seanad, to be progressed urgently by Government in the Dáil. A spokesperson for the group said: "Quite simply, Senator Quinn's legislation should be enacted by the Dáil and by all means let it be referred by the President to the Supreme Court to test its Constitutionality. This, at least, would end, once and for all, the blanket ban on changing what is an unjust law under the guise of legal advice." The group spokesperson also says that the Government might think this problem has gone away but it hasn't. "Many small businesses and retailers are still struggling to cope with high rents which, when combined

with low levels of consumer spending, puts their very survival on the line. For many small businesses it's too late; they've already had to close down and many more are on the brink of doing so." Hardware Association Ireland believes that, for the hardware sector in particular, in the context of small, but encouraging, signs of consumer spending and the positive impact of the Home Renovation Tax Incentive Scheme, it is critical now to create the right conditions to achieve a sustainable recovery. Upward-only rent reviews don't just affect individual shops as there is the knock-on effect when these shops close.

It is devastating entire streets, city and town centres as well as commercial areas. Businesses are struggling because high rents are putting shops under pressure. High rents which can only go up cost jobs and impede growth. The new business grouping is demanding that the Government honours its commitment in the Programme for Government to enact legislation to deal with the legacy issue of upward-only rent reviews. With Senator Quinn's Bill, there is a means of rectifying this problem. It needs to be enacted without further delay. Regarding any Constitutional hazards arising from legislating in this area, advice available from a Senior Counsel provided some time ago on this topic has made it very clear that legislation to address upward-only rents would be Constitutional. The group's position is that the legislation should be enacted.



MCMAHONS CONCEPT CLICKS WITH TRADE IN DUBLIN

The new premises has a dedicated and expert staff who have years of experience behind the counter.

McMahons Builders Warehouse launches first branch in Blanchardstown

McMahons Builders Warehouse, the newest branch in the McMahon's Group, brings together a long-established name in the merchandising business and an innovative digital strategy aimed at providing a comprehensive service for busy, cost-conscious tradespeople.

Tommy Burne, Branch Manager with McMahon's Builders Warehouse spoke to Bernard Potter, Editor of *The HAI Hardware Journal*, about the new initiative spearheading McMahon's newest venture.

Nationwide and 100 per cent Irish-owned, McMahon's has been providing quality building supplies and materials for over 180 years. However, longevity and a strong brand do not

in themselves guarantee survival and, in a time of rapid and unpredictable change, the ability to adapt and innovate is crucial in ensuring success for even the most established businesses.

It was McMahon's openness to innovative ideas and their appetite for exploring new business models that attracted Tommy Burne to get involved in the Builders Warehouse project. Tommy is a veteran of the builders' providers and builders' merchant sector with over 34 years in the business. His CV boasts an impressive range of experience, starting in Heiton Buckley and continuing in the development of hardware and builders merchants offerings at one of Ireland's leading co-op store networks. Not one

to shy away from change, Tommy has proved he always has his finger on the pulse. "I've always had an interest in technology and what it can offer the hardware sector and when I saw the vision McMahon's had for McMahon's Builders Warehouse, I realised it was a great opportunity."

NO-FRILLS BUILDERS PROVIDERS

What is the Builders Warehouse concept? "Essentially, it's a 'brick and click' idea that answers Tradesmen's needs quickly and conveniently. It is based on the principle that time is money. It's very much a no-frills building providers business with a no-nonsense pricing structure.

"We stock all the building essentials.



Child's Play

There are some self adhesive floor protectors that require the purchase of a rather expensive applicator to unroll the product. Others, have the adhesive applied to the inside of the roll and require more than a degree of brute strength to force the protector to unroll.



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The Blanchardstown premises stocks tried and tested brands.

Customers can browse online, order what they need and pick up their items at the Blanchardstown branch that day or the next morning. Equally, if a customer is browsing online and sees something they're interested in and would like to know more about it, they can telephone us for immediate help or advice. We've integrated online and phone ordering into the model to speed up the whole process."

NO-NONSENSE TRADE PRICES

At the core of the Builders Warehouse concept is its Trade Card programme. This is a Tradesman's loyalty programme designed to ensure trade customers get the lowest trade price on every visit. Tommy explains: "Members (i.e. cardholders) get a Trade Card price on our entire product range. Our Trade Members will also benefit from the latest offers and promotions running in branch and online."

The benefits that come with having a trade card include:

- ▶ realistic trade prices for Members which are regularly price checked to ensure trade customers are getting the best price ;
- ▶ a dedicated, expert staff who have years of experience behind the counter;
- ▶ specialist Trade brands and products that are industry-tried and tested;
- ▶ extra trade cards for employees to ensure all members can get the price benefits as well as ensuring all purchases are stored under the one account;



Tommy Burne, Branch Manager



Members get a Trade Card price on the entire product range.

- ▶ VAT-approved itemised invoices that can be viewed and printed out at any time with the McMahan's Builders Warehouse online account logs; and,
- ▶ being the first to hear about any promotions or events being run by the builders' warehouse team.

Tommy comments: "McMahan's has invested significantly in bringing together a team of people with the right blend of tech and trade experience to get this venture off to a flying start. Warehouse staff have been chosen for their expertise and experience in building, plumbing and heating products. Catering mainly for the professional builder or plumber, we stock a wide range of products across all ranges, such as building materials, timber & sheet materials, plumbing & heating, insulation, painting & decorating, doors & floors, bathrooms, landscaping & a large electrical range."

The buying power of the McMahan's group underpins the McMahan's Builders Warehouse initiative enabling it to offer quality branded products at sensible prices, according to Tommy. "Our first branch here in Blanchardstown, a 900m² facility, had a 'soft' opening in May and we've been delighted with the response we've had so far. We had already seen demand for a brick and click model in Dublin on our existing McMahan's website, BuildersWarehouse.ie is very much the 'cheeky' younger brother to the group site, mcmahons.ie. All the signs are that the time is right for an initiative like this, which combines a well-located physical premise in Blanchardstown and an easy-to-access ordering process."



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PLUMBING AND HEATING FOCUS

The McMahons Builders Warehouse concept is primarily focused on trade covering all Tradesmen's requirements. The model also caters for the more specialised roles of plumbing and electrical with an extensive range of both stocked on site.

"As the economy finds its feet again, the dynamism in the market is coming from the trade businesses, like the 'man in the white van'.

Builders Warehouse is positioned to provide a fast, efficient service to these customers, the plumbing and heating trade in particular. We're confident that these businesses will drive demand consistently over the next few years and the group sees the Blanchardstown premises as a launching pad for potential further expansion in Dublin in the medium

term." The Blanchardstown premise represents a welcome return to the Dublin market for McMahons:

"It was important to open a Dublin branch as it is leading the recovery of the construction industry. Dublin is experiencing meaningful growth and we want to have a physical presence in the capital to serve our customer base both in the branch and online."

Statistics from the National Housing Construction Index and Ulster Bank Construction Purchasing Managers Index suggest that the Builders Warehouse initiative could be well-timed: "Planning applications and commencements are up nationally for the first quarter of 2014 compared to 2013. Dublin showed an increase of 57 per cent in applications.

As far as commencements are concerned, there's been an increase

of 192 per cent year-on-year over 2013. While it is from a low base, that's still a massive increase and probably is due in great part to commencement notices being lodged before the introduction of the new building regulations on March 1, 2014; having said that, the trend looks to have continued in March as well."

For Tommy and his team in Blanchardstown, this is an exciting time: "As with many businesses during the downturn, we had to reassess our operations. This new branch is substantially different to anything we've done before. It is the result of a significant investment in our IT systems and internal processes. McMahons is re-entering the Dublin market as a much stronger and more efficient business."



Mark McMahon, Managing Director of McMahons, looking forward to the next chapter for this nationwide, Irish company.

A TRADITION OF INNOVATION

Founded in the 1830s in Limerick, by the mid-19th century McMahons was a flourishing business involved in cooperage, manufacturing, and saw milling. From its earliest days, McMahons had been a major importer of timber materials to support its various activities. In the early part of the 20th century, the company grew to become the largest timber supplier in the country. Later, McMahons widened its focus to include all building materials and plumbing & heating materials used by the construction industry.

McMahons now has stores in 11 locations nationwide and expects to open another store in Dublin within the year.

McMahons is still a family-owned, 100% owned Irish business, Mark McMahon, MD, has continued to follow the path of change and innovation set for him by the five generations of McMahons before him.



ANNUAL LEAVE — USEFUL MANAGEMENT TIPS

Tom Smyth provides some timely advice on annual leave

As summer time comes around again, the majority of employees are planning and organising holidays. Whether it is for two weeks on a Mediterranean island or a camping trip to Achill, every employee accrues paid leave from work which is protected by law.

THE LEGAL POSITION

The Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997 sets out an employee's annual leave entitlement as:

- a) Four working weeks in a leave year in which the employee works at least 1,365 hours (unless it is a leave year in which he or she changes employment);
- b) 1/3 of a working week per calendar month that the employee works at least 117 hours.;
- c) 8% of the hours an employee works in a leave year (but subject

to a maximum of four working weeks).

For full-time employees, who work five days per week, the legal leave allocation is, therefore, 20 days. I would always recommend against mentioning 20 days in written terms and conditions of employment, as, for employees who work less than five days per week, 20 days holidays will equate to a far more favourable amount of time off. Of course, there is nothing stopping employers voluntarily giving employees additional holiday time if they so wish, as a perk of employment.

Employers must encourage employees to take their holidays. Holidays provide an opportunity for employees to relax, recharge the batteries and come back to work with a renewed energy to make their employer money! If an employee does not use their allocation of leave days in

a year, the employer may allow them to 'carry over' excess days into the following year for up to six months. Under no circumstances can an employee ever be paid for untaken holidays. This may encourage an employee not to take time off and is against the law.

This is also true for part-time and student workers. These employees build up holiday time just like full-time employees, and should also apply for and receive this time off in the same way as their full-time colleagues. Part-time employees should not have holidays paid out to them, just because they are part-time.

USEFUL TIPS

Your Contract of Employment or Employee Handbook should have a clause which sets out some basics principles for how you allocate leave.

REQUESTS

Be clear on how employees are to request leave. Do they apply verbally or in writing? Do they get verbal or written approval? It is recommended to provide written approval, or denial, as this allows no room for miscommunication.

BLACKOUT PERIODS

The basic principle is that employers give holidays rather than employees taking them. Obviously an employer has to be reasonable in how they manage this right but many employers allocate holidays at Christmas, to facilitate a shutdown in manufacturing plants or the 'Builders Fortnight' at the end of July. In Retail, employers will also nominate times of the year where no holiday requests will be granted, e.g. Christmas. It is important that a policy such as this is for genuine commercial reasons, is communicated clearly to employees and is enforced fairly for all employees.

NOTICE

It is recommended that you communicate to employees the notice needed to maximise their potential of getting their leave requests granted. It is likely that you will only be able to allow a few holiday requests at the one time so encouraging early requests, for example four weeks, will encourage an employee to be proactive in making bookings to avoid disappointment if you have to deny them for operational reasons.

SICK LEAVE

Payment for Annual Leave cannot be given if an employee is certified as ill and unfit to work. At times, if an employee rings in sick for a day

they may request that the employer pays them for a day of leave instead. Employers must decline this request.

MAXIMUM TIME OFF

Employers are obliged to allow employees take two weeks off work if they request it. In recent times, with long haul holidays becoming more affordable and accessible, requests for three or four week holidays are a regular occurrence. Employers should consider the commercial needs of their business and consider whether leave applications of this length are workable. Remember an employee earns holiday time as they work throughout the year. If you allow and pay a three week holiday in, say January, that employee will need to work with you until September to earn back the holiday time given.

AVOID A BUILD-UP

I recommend all employers, but especially retailers such as builder's merchants and builder's providers should make a note to review all leave totals around September of each year. It is common for Retailers not to allow leave during the Christmas season so employers should avoid a scenario where many employees retain a disproportionately high level of leave into the winter season. I recommend a memo to each employee in early autumn advising them of what leave days they have left and encouraging them to book them up.

UNPAID LEAVE

Employers may receive requests for additional unpaid leave from work for anything from an extra day on holiday, to a three-day week over the summer to tie in with the kids' school holidays, to a year's leave of absence to travel

the world. Employer's must be aware of the precedent they may be setting in granting such requests and display due caution. I would always recommend you ask the employee to set out the details and reason for their request in writing and then encourage the employer to review the roster and commercial plans of the business against this request. Difficulties can arise if employers seem more disposed to granting these requests for favoured employees but not for others. Claims of discrimination and inequality could follow. As with all aspects of Employment Law, I would always encourage an employer to seek advice if they are faced with a request or query from an employee that they have not faced before.



TOM SMYTH

Tom Smyth is Managing Director of Tom Smyth & Associates, a HR consultancy, established in 1991, that gives Irish employers practical advice on HR, industrial relations and employment law issues.

TRENDS LOOK POSITIVE ACROSS THE IRISH SEA

The view from the UK merchanting sector is more positive than it has been for many years, according to John Newcomb, MD of the Builders Merchants Federation (BMF) but significant challenges exist in regard to the availability of finance, poor payment practices and the need to recruit the next generation of merchants

I made the move from hardware to merchanting in 2012 when the construction industry on this side of the Irish Sea was stuck in the doldrums. Sixteen months on, I'm pleased to report UK construction is now improving, and our position may well be reflected in the Irish market.

There was positive news in the first quarter of 2014 when the UK Construction Trade Survey reported a fourth consecutive quarter of growth – the first time this has occurred since the financial crisis began six years ago – with all sectors of the construction industry reporting a rise in output. Similarly, the BMF's own Q1 Sales Indicators recorded a 10.4 per cent increase in merchant sales compared with the same period last year and we have seen a growth in market confidence among both manufacturing and merchant members. There are still numerous challenges facing SME businesses within our sector. These are financial, as lending to our industry is still seen to be risky, and operational, as constantly changing, onerous and poorly written regulation makes it harder for merchants, manufacturers and their contractor customers to run their businesses.

STRONGER TOGETHER

We are all working on the same playing field with the same rules and regulations, and our representation is stronger together rather than acting apart. This is one reason why the BMF has seen significant growth in



parts of the building materials supply chain and the BMF is the forum that allows them to discuss business outside of commercial negotiations. The BMF also takes up common problems with regulators and enforcement agencies and is in regular dialogue with national and local politicians and their civil servants putting forward the views of our members. I was particularly pleased to see the support given to home building in the recent UK Budget Statement. In addition to extending the Help to Buy equity loan scheme, a new £500m loan fund for SME builders



The BMF believes the UK government has a role to play in helping SMEs raise finance via a more coherent programme of schemes and by encouraging more bank lending to builders.

membership over the last year. At the beginning of April, BMF membership exceeded 450 for the first time since 2007. Together, our merchant and manufacturing members have combined sales in excess of £12.5bn and employ over 80,000 people, and BMF's 300 merchant members operate over 2,500 branches providing the most efficient route to the construction market. Manufacturers and merchants are, jointly, integral

will help unblock 15,000 plots stalled due to difficulty in obtaining finance. In total, the government is projecting the building of 200,000 new homes, including a new garden city. By invigorating the market with such schemes, ministers recognise that construction is a primary driver of home-grown economic activity, and that more has to be done to meet demand. The government must now deliver

on these promises and there are other areas where its support would undoubtedly help the recovery. The Chancellor missed an opportunity to promote RMI work and in particular to stimulate energy efficient upgrades of existing housing stock. Reducing council tax bands and/or Stamp Duty rates to reward energy efficient homes is one approach worthy of consideration.

A reduction in the VAT rate is another and the BMF supports a construction industry campaign to cut the rate of VAT to five per cent on all domestic refurbishment work. This would not only boost work for thousands of SME builders but would also save hundreds of pounds on individual energy bills.

KEEP CASH FLOWING

Our industry needs access to finance, lent responsibly to credit-worthy borrowers at decent rates. The lack of readily available finance affects not only small building firms, but also the merchants that supply them. Many BMF members cite instances of short-notice tightening of overdrafts, unreasonable demands for collateral or outright rejection of finance. The government has a role to play via a more coherent programme of schemes to help SMEs raise finance and by encouraging more bank lending to builders for operating and projects, but it is also the case that merchants already act as bankers to the trade, offering the simplest, most effective source of credit for SMEs.

Last year, the BMF became the first trade association to launch an initiative using the government-backed Trade Credit Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme, securing up to £50m additional finance for independent builders merchants and their customers. The scheme allows BMF merchants to extend more credit to new and existing customers, safe in the knowledge that it is largely underwritten. It's good for merchants and will enable some of their customers to expand their businesses. Being a government scheme, there is an element of bureaucracy which has held some merchants back from applying but at the end of the initial six months over 30 BMF merchants – with annual turnovers ranging from less than a million to the tens of millions – have qualified to participate or are in the process of being approved.

The scheme has now been extended for a further six months to September 2014, and we are pushing for a further extension for another year beyond that date. Securing these extensions will make it possible for many more BMF merchants to participate. While increased credit will help prime the pump of construction work, poor payment practices between businesses can bring it to a grinding halt. Holding onto money impacts the entire supply chain and will hamper economic recovery. A survey by accounting software provider, Sage UK Ltd, found that 72 per cent of SMEs have waited more than 60 days for payment, and 57 per cent more than 90 days. In the construction

industry it can be even worse, with some main contractors moving to 120 days as a default position. The BMF has called on the government to tackle the problem head on by enforcing the Late Payment Code, currently a voluntary undertaking with no penalties attached. We advocate elevating the issue to board level and requiring mandatory disclosure of corporate payment practice in the Auditor's Report. In the latest voluntary move, some of the UK's largest main contractors have agreed to pay all suppliers within 30 days from 2018. While they hope that peer pressure will lead many large contractors and clients to sign up for fear of losing their best sub-contractors to firms which pay on better terms, without enforcement, we remain doubtful that the majority of b2b payments will be made in less than 60 days, twice as long as the normally stated terms.

ENGAGING TALENT

Nevertheless, the view from here is more positive than it has been for several years and we are, once again, mindful of the need to employ the right people for the job. While it is important for government to continue to invest in apprentice training, there is still a difficulty in obtaining suitable and committed youngsters. With relatively few 16- to 19-year olds entering merchanting, the BMF is about to launch a generic recruitment campaign. If we are to have the next generation in place to benefit from the economic upturn, we need to get the message across to schools and colleges that aren't aware of what a rewarding, diverse and challenging career merchanting offers.



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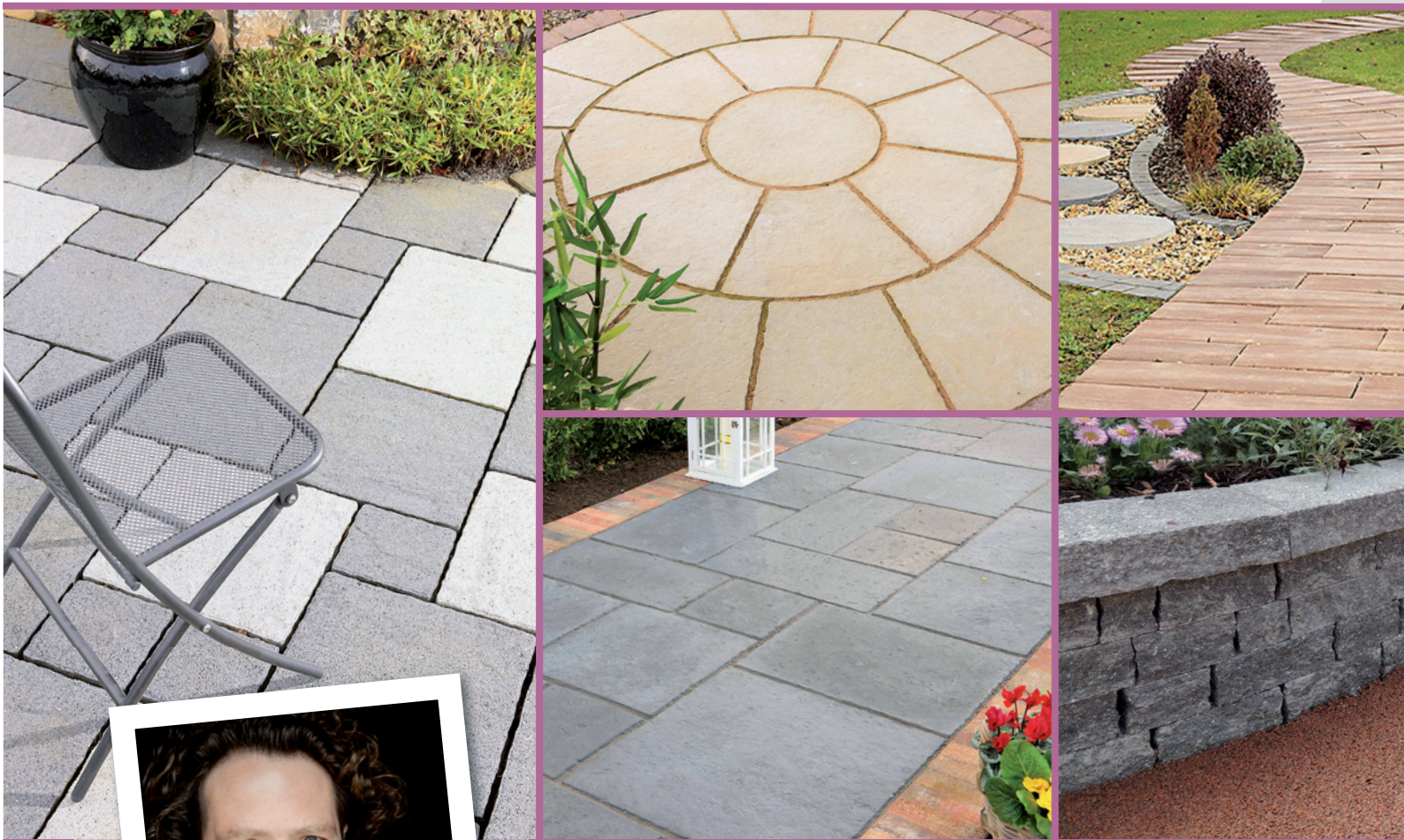
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**NEW
for 2014!**

This is the time of year when gardening activity really gets going. Our special correspondent Joseph Blair reports on the latest news from this busy sector



President Higgins was one of the 100,000 plus visitors to this year's Bloom.

BLOOM 2014 — HOW THE NUMBERS ADD UP

Bord Bia welcomed over 106,000 visitors to its Bloom festival in the Phoenix Park, Dublin over the June bank holiday weekend. It's a slight fall in numbers compared to last year's 110,000 but, if you take the weather into account, then the 2014 numbers are very positive, as the opening day of Bloom was a washout. Exhibitors, in the main, were happy with sales and many were running competitions to continue the customer engagement long after Bloom is over. A Behaviours and Attitudes study valued the onsite sales at €5.5m overall. Speaking at the event, Aidan Cotter, Chief Executive, Bord Bia commented: "Bloom is now firmly established as the most important event in the Irish horticulture calendar." Some key statistics from the event include:

- ▶ over 80,000 plants were sold at Bloom 2014 at an estimated value of €750,000; and,
- ▶ over 100 Polytunnels costing €800 were sold over the five days.

The next Bloom will open on Thursday, May 28, 2015. Although now over until

next year, there are many opportunities for you to engage with these dedicated 'Bloomers' over the rest of the summer. Sit down with your team and work on a promotion plan to get them in to experience your own garden offering.



Flower power at Bloom.



The Woodie's Garden at Bloom.

WOODIE'S — BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT

One of the best surprises at Bloom this year was the Woodie's garden. It was less flat pack and more bespoke, which was a big departure for the Hardware and Garden Centre chain. It's a further sign of the transformation underway as the hardware sector changes and broadens its appeal to a wider audience. The overall reaction to the 'Past, Present & Future' interlinked gardens was very positive. The ongoing relationship with RTE's SuperGarden continues to bear fruit as the crowds flocked to this year's winning garden by Cian Hawes, which was built beside the Woodie's garden. The Woodie's marketing team were out in force manning the gardens and answering questions along with their horticulturalists from around the country who are given the chance every year to be 'Inspired by Bloom'.

TRADE SHOWS NOT TO MISS

GLAS returns to Dublin's Citywest Event Centre on July 24 and offers a unique business networking opportunity for Ireland's horticulture and garden retail businesses. New products and plants coming online for next year will be on display and there should be a wealth of ideas to influence your future buying decisions. Both Ireland's GLAS and GLEE in the UK are important for future planning of stock choices, as with both shows you start to get a real feel for new trends coming down the line. Another event that is worth putting into your horticulture calendar is the UK's Four Oaks show taking place in September. For those of you feeling less than inspired about 'Garden Retail', former star of RTE's Dragon's Den, Sean Gallagher will welcome visitors to GLAS with an inspiring talk on entrepreneurship and the power of positivity.



GLAS returns to Dublin's Citywest Event Centre on July 24.

GIY EMPHASISES HEALTH

Noticeable at Bloom this year was the move towards 'horticulture for health and wellness'. The exhibitors, located beside the fruit and vegetable market were demonstrating to the public how important horticultural produce is, in a very practical way, to health and wellness in our everyday lives.

Fresh produce is now being presented as a nutritionally superior food type in the diet, with huge benefits for human health and wellbeing. Also expect to see more interest in, and products dealing with, the medicinal and healing power of plants. One of the most popular

gardens at Bloom was that of veteran contributor, Fiann Ó Nualláin, who argues that the first place we should look for cures and treatments to common garden injuries and gardeners' maladies is our own garden. He asks if we can have GIY food, why not medicine too? Fiann's garden was influenced by his latest book 'The Holistic Gardener'. His top tips:

- ▶ start work right away on a themed plant area for medicinal plants; and,
- ▶ invite a local herbalist into your plant centre to give a talk on the healing power of plants.

SUPPORT IRISH HORTICULTURE AND JOBS

Aquaflor Flowers Direct are currently running a very successful campaign aimed at the public which promotes Irish growers of cut flowers and plants. Arjan van Veen tells us: "Over the coming months, we are doing our utmost to support Irish growers and jobs in horticulture.

We will have a selection of flowers and foliage that are grown here in

Ireland including lillies, eucalyptus, geraniums and alstroemeria among others. "We also want to help you tell your customers that their Local Plant Retailer is supporting Irish growers and horticulture jobs. We have produced a poster that we hope will reflect this message to the general public." You can find out more about the campaign at www.aquaflorflowersdirect.ie

INTERNATIONAL GARDEN CENTRE CONGRESS

Over 300 of the best minds in garden retail and the owners of the world's leading garden centres will descend on Ireland for the 56th International Garden Centre Congress running from August 10 to August 15, 2014. The visit will include tours to some of Ireland's top Garden Visit and Retail Centres such as Arboretum and the Pavilion at Powerscourt. It's a major coup for Ireland to host the event.

The current President of the international group is our very own Rachel Doyle of Arboretum. www.igccireland2014.com



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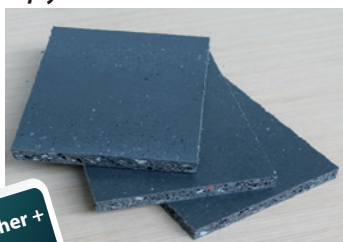


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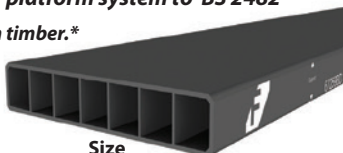
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John Hassett,
builders merchant
and business coach



TAKING STOCK

Improving customer service while reducing stocks

We all know the importance of stock management. John Hassett outlines a straightforward method to focus more effectively on this aspect of the business

Having the right quantity of the right product, at the right time, on the right shelf at the right price is more complicated than it sounds. A method to simplify the process is to categorise products by their frequency of sale, for example, as *A*, *B*, *C* and *D*. Your top sellers, which constitute a small number, are usually sold daily, and these are *A* products, for instance, cement or briquettes. *B* products sell weekly, such as, say, white spirits or dust bins. *C* products sell infrequently and *D* products are in the 'departure lounge'. The specific products that fall within each category will vary according to the nature of the individual business.

FAST AND SLOW MOVERS

Reviewing products on this basis ensures slow-moving items can be identified and removed, thus leaving space for new products. You should always be in stock of your fast-moving products. Your computer system can be structured to give you this information. The frequency of sale determines your actions with the product, e.g., *A* products need to be merchandised on a daily basis and purchased on a weekly/fortnightly basis. *A* products are usually price-sensitive and can also be a product starter, e.g. reinforcing

mesh. A product that is out of stock, or priced wrongly, can mean losing a customer or a project. Therefore, ensure adequate stock is held and prices are checked against those of competitors on a regular basis. The matrix in the accompanying diagram, Figure 1, is intended to represent a 'typical' hardware business. When the figures are examined, it is clear where cash is tied up and could be released, without affecting customer service. All products are not equal.

Category	Frequency	No. Products	Value	Stock Turns	Months on Shelf	Sales	Margin €	Margin %
<i>A</i>	Daily	100	80,000	8.0	2	750,000	120,000	16
<i>B</i>	Weekly	200	120,000	5.0	2	750,000	150,000	20
<i>C</i>	Monthly	20,000	500,000	1.5	8	1,000,000	300,000	30
<i>D</i>	Rarely	10,000	200,000	0.1	120	25,000	5,000	20
		30,300	900,000	2.2	5	2,525,000	575,000	23

Figure 1. Typical Mix of Products

In the example above, *A* products make up 0.3 per cent of the stock keeping units (SKU), 9 per cent of the stock value, 30 per cent of sales and 21 per cent of the total margin. In contrast, *C* products make up 66 per cent of the SKU, 55 per cent of the stock value, 40 per cent of sales and 50 per cent of the total margin. In simple terms, sales come from *As* and margin from *Cs*. If cash is tight, *Cs* can be reduced with a small impact on margin, as there are so many of them. However, if *As* were reduced, it would have a big impact on sales, ultimately reducing the sale of *Cs*. In this case, the stock holding of *A* should be

increased to avoid stock outs and this could be financed by discounting and selling of *D* products.

In the example, the most frequently sold products are working too hard, while other products are warming shelves. Not all products are equal. The categorisation principle outlined here helps management communicate with staff on the importance of some products over others. It would be a serious mistake to be out of an *A* but it's ok to wait until the end of the month to purchase a *C* product. It is easy to have too little stock of *A*

products and too many of *C* and *D*. In conclusion, categorising products based on the frequency of sales, will:

- ▶ increase sales by reducing out-of-stocks;
- ▶ free up working capital by reducing the stock levels of *C* without hurting sales; and,
- ▶ allow you to de-clutter your shop by selling off problem products.

John Hassett is Owner Manager at Hassetts Topline Crinkill and Birr, Co. Offaly. He is also a Business Coach and Accountant with international experience.



GREEN LIGHT FOR HARDWARE SHOPPERS

There is a growing perception that consumers have become more environmentally friendly, but has the Irish shopper really become more 'green' aware? Alan Conway investigates

It would appear that consumers are beginning to shop with a greater amount of confidence as Ireland continues its economic recovery. The latest Retail Sales Index from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) is reporting an increase in month-on-month volume for hardware of 3.3 per cent, the second highest performing category for April. However, when customers are purchasing items, are they paying for goods that are more 'energy efficient' or does that come into their thinking? Certainly, there are signs that Irish consumers have, over the last number of years, begun to shop with a stronger focus on what is more energy efficient and good for the environment.

SAVING MONEY

Figures released by the Sustainable Energy Authority Of Ireland (SEAI) showed that energy retrofit works worth €85m were carried out to homes and public facilities in 2013, with 2,300 jobs being created as a result. The Government has continued its investment in the sector, announcing in February of this year that a sum of €13.5m euro would be set aside for 'Better Energy' projects in 2014. Speaking at the announcement of the figures for 2013, Dr Brian Motherway, SEAI CEO said he believes that energy efficiency has become a widely understood issue that many

people have now embraced. "The sustainable energy sector is vibrant and fast moving," he stated. "We saw over 26,000 homes upgraded in 2013, which means that as of now one in seven of all Irish homes have been upgraded to reduce their energy bills. "With the EU committed to a 40 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2030, we have to maintain momentum in achieving greater energy efficiency and exploiting our uniquely rich renewable energy resources." Investment by the Government has seen Ireland dramatically reduce its carbon footprint. Figures released by the SEAI showed that energy usage dropped by 4.3 per cent in 2013, which confirms that Ireland is now

becoming a more environmentally friendly country to live and work in. Further proof of this came in the form of a report on the use of energy in Irish homes, published by SEAI last year, entitled *Residential Energy in Ireland*, which showed that energy use per household fell by 18 per cent between 2006 and 2011. The report, the SEAI says, is the most comprehensive analysis of energy usage in Irish homes and highlights how energy efficiency improvement trebled in pace during that five-year period compared with the previous 10 years.

Speaking about the report Kevin O'Rourke, Head of Low Carbon Technologies, SEAI said: "This report presents evidence of genuine energy efficiency gains. It shows that homeowners are looking to reduce their energy spend and maximise value through home investment and purchasing decisions,

and their own personal behaviour. "While there are a number of factors influencing behavioral change, the continued strengthening of our building regulations, among the most demanding in Europe, and the success of the Government's energy retrofitting policies and Better Energy schemes are clearly paying dividends."

MOMENTUM NEEDED

James Hogan, Programme Manager at Clean Technology Centre, a non-profit organisation, which has been promoting sustainability since 1992, also believes the consumer is becoming more environmentally aware and energy-efficient and that the retail sector has a part to play in that process. "The retail industry has increased customer awareness on the benefits of purchasing local and environmentally sustainable products. For example, SuperValu promotes

local producers, as this is better for the environment, jobs and the community. At a multinational level, the likes of Nestle and McDonald's have also put sustainability top of their agenda." Hogan believes that this retail drive will continue. "We all need to become sustainable consumers. We need to purchase goods that can be sustained by the environment of our planet. For example, we should purchase sustainable timber and renewable energy."

OPEN TO NEW IDEAS

Since 1999, MacCann & Byrne has recognised and pioneered the concept of sustainable building products and are considered to be one of the leading experts in this area. Tom Barbour of MacCann & Byrne believes that there is a change in people's attitudes towards shopping and that they are becoming

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more environmentally-conscious.

"There is definitely an increasing awareness of the long-term benefits of green materials. Once upon a time, customers would not have embraced the idea of shopping 'Green' but I definitely feel that way of thinking has begun to change. "Customers are more open to the concept and more willing to listen to the argument for green products. They are beginning to see the benefits of shopping more sensibly." Tom continues: "I think customers are seeing how shopping green can not only benefit the environment, but how it can affect them on a day-to-day basis. Becoming more environmentally aware is vital for future generations. The environment and the health of the buildings that we live in is so crucial to our everyday existence that we have to ensure that they are in the best possible condition." Tom believes that customers are looking to shop in stores that have an environmentally friendly outlook. "As a leading provider in this area, we find that customers are actively looking to purchase green materials."

MORE TO DO

Charles Burns, Director of Water, Kingspan, agrees that people have become more energy aware, but believes that the government can do more to take a leadership role in developing and assisting the consumer commitment that already exists. "There is no doubt that people are thinking a lot harder about what they purchase, especially in the areas of new build, retro-fitting, solar and insulation. However, the Government can be doing more to encourage this change in attitude." The area of water charges is an example of where the public aren't necessarily full aware of the environmental implications of water usage. While people have changed their thinking as regards to energy consumption, Charles feels the consumer isn't fully aware of just how much they could be paying for certain services, like water.

"In Germany, for example, it costs €6 for 1,000 litres of water. People may think that they will be paying extortionate rates here in Ireland, but in comparison to the rest of Europe,

the rates are reasonable."

The lack of grant schemes in Ireland is something that needs to be looked at, according to Charles. "More is always better," he says. "One of the things that we are calling on the Government to do is to put grant schemes in place to encourage people to conserve water. Currently, for instance, there is no government support for rainwater harvesting. I think that, once the government puts imaginative, cost-effective schemes in place then innovation in this area will really take off."

Ultimately, the views of our industry insiders suggest that consumers are becoming increasingly environmentally aware, but in these cash-strapped times if that trend is to be strengthened and to develop its own momentum, it must be supported. It appears essential that the retail sector must continue to be innovative in its product offerings, while the government must underpin the retail sector's investment with prudent measures of its own to incentivise the public to make the 'green' purchasing choice.

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ALL DECKED OUT FOR SUMMER

The summer of 2013 was a profitable time for the decking and fencing sector, with soaring temperatures ensuring a busy time for all retailers. *The HAI Hardware Journal* talks to some of the leading companies in the coatings and decking accessory market to find out their thoughts on the summer ahead and highlight the latest product news.

Despite mixed weather in May, Dulux (which operates under the Cuprinol brand) continues to go from strength to strength.

The company's significant brand investment includes the co-sponsorship of RTE's *Super Garden* programme and it is confident of a successful 2014 summer period. "We are expecting to see something similar to 2013 where the Cuprinol brand enjoyed great success," says Maria Flood, Brand Manager, Dulux Paints. "At Cuprinol, we believe that the perfect garden is a well-loved and lived-in space like any other room in the home. We also feel that caring for your garden, wood and decking should be as easy as possible, so that you can spend those rare sunny moments relaxing in your garden." Cuprinol claims to have made decking simpler than ever with its new Total Deck product, a category first in decking products. The launch of this product aims to facilitate people who want to clean, restore and protect their grey weathered decks and get them back to a natural finish "with nothing more than a garden broom and a few sunny hours". Cuprinol is also this year launching two new colours in its Cuprinol Anti-slip Decking Stain range. Recently, Cuprinol judge Roisin Lafferty appeared on RTE's *Super Garden* and Cuprinol's colourful installations were seen at the Bloom festival in the Phoenix Park over the June bank holiday weekend.

AN UPWARD CURVE

DS Supplies is also looking forward to a busy trading period throughout the summer months, as Derek

Doyle explains. "We are expecting a very good year at DS Supplies as retailers are finally beginning to see light at the end of a very long tunnel. We noticed last year that things were picking up and purchasing from our customers was improving. "Our new GreenFX range of artificial grass and artificial hedging products are perfect for landscaping, apartment balconies and exhibitions and are available for purchase now." Derek adds: "These products are suitable for indoor and outdoor use. The artificial grass is available in 12mm to 40mm heights and in handy pack rolls." DS Supplies is widely known for its the 'Trojan' branded range of flooring and DIY accessories. Trojan keeps abreast of trends that are in vogue, such as grey oak flooring, and has light grey and dark grey finishing profiles currently available. There is also a stainless steel range of heavy-duty floor profiles now available and suitable for contract and commercial applications. The DS Supplies 2014 brochure is now available on hard copy or in a PDF format. For more information visit www.dssupplies.com "You will also find us updating news on Facebook regularly. Most of our branded products are available at all leading DIY, builder merchants & independent hardware stores nationwide," Derek concludes.

TREMENDOUS CHOICE

Everbuild Building Products has an extensive range of decking and fencing products designed for both trade and domestic use, according to Matt O'Dell of Everbuild. "Demand for decking and fencing treatments

is sure to rise as people prepare for the warmer weather. Gardens throughout the county are in need of rejuvenation and with products such as Fence Mate and Everbuild Decking Treatment, renovation can be done in a very cost-effective way. "Everbuild Decking Treatment is another popular product within the range. It is designed to preserve and restore timber decking, while protecting against wood decay, mould and wood staining." According to Everbuild, Fence Mate is the perfect product for people wanting to bring life into their gardens quickly and easily. Fence Mate is a solvent-free fence and shed treatment designed to provide a safe alternative to creosote. "The Everbuild Decking Treatment is another popular product amongst





customers. It is designed to preserve and restore timber decking, while protecting against wood decay, mould and wood staining," Matt adds.

IMPROVING YOUR SURROUNDINGS

The summer months are when you should start refurbishing and coating your outdoor garden furniture, decking, fences, sheds, stone and patio surfaces and Excellence Ltd claims DIY enthusiasts will not have to look further than their product line-up for all their coating requirements. "The consumer is looking for products that will bring their surfaces back to a new finish rather than going to the expense of replacing garden furniture or decking," explains Paul Nicholson, Sales Manager, Excellence Ltd. "At Excellence, we provide a range of products that are cost effective, good quality and suitable for all types of surfaces. People must remember that preparation is the key factor before you apply anything to outside surfaces. It's important you clean surfaces and make sure they are dry before coating." The extensive range of Rustin's Wood and Stone coating products are available from Excellence Ltd, the main distributors of Rustin's products in Ireland. Key products in the range include:

- ▶ Rustin's Quick Dry Decking Stain & Seal, a quick-drying waterborne stain, which dries to a tough, water-resistant, matt finish and is available in three colours: Antique Pine, Brown Cedar and English Oak;
- ▶ Rustin's Quick Dry Outdoor Danish Oil, a waterborne blend of natural plant oils and other special ingredients to nourish and protect all types of outdoor timber. This oil can be used on surfaces where food is used. It can also be used for both interior and exterior application;
- ▶ Rustin's Stone Cleaner is based on a blend of

special cleaning agents to remove dirt, algae, mildew and grease. It is formulated to clean all types of natural stone including granite, limestone, slate and travertine on driveways, pathways and patios prior to coating with Rustin's Stone Sealer; and,

- ▶ Rustin's Stone Sealer is a quick drying, water-borne, transparent sealer with a natural matt finish. It is suitable for use on all types of natural stone including granite, limestone, slate and travertine on driveways, pathways and patios. A one-coat application is all that is required when using the sealer.

STRONG TRADE

Fleetwood says its range of garden woodcare products is proving very popular thus far in 2014 and the company is expecting another strong trading period during the summer months. "We launched the Fleetwood range of woodcare products in the belief that the Irish consumer would support an Irish manufactured brand that offered quality and improved value for money. To date, the sales generated have been excellent and fully support our decision to launch into this established market," said Steven McQuillan, Marketing Manager of Fleetwood. "Sales of the range, which includes Fleetwood Timberguard, decking oil and teak oils, have been very strong to date. We believe our efforts in the woodcare sector during 2014



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are very good for the retailer and the consumer alike and we are looking forward to seeing the Fleetwood brand develop further in 2015," Steven commented. Among some of the new additions to the Fleetwood range are three new colours to the Weatherclad brand: Fields of Gold, Sandbank and Pebble Bay. Using Permacryl Technology, the paint film resists degradation brought on by the demanding impact of Ireland's extreme weather conditions. "Its colour-fast formula offers superior fade resistance and waterproofing, making the paint job look new for longer," Steven explained. "Once applied the advanced mould guard system, containing biocides, inhibits the growth of mildew, mould and algae."

WOOD TREATMENTS

Larsen wood treatments, such as Lardec Wood Stains, are being well received in builder's merchants throughout Ireland, according to Brendan Devenney, Area Sales Manager for Larsen. "These oil-based wood stains are easy to apply and are long lasting, locally manufactured products. Colour selector displays and other point-of-sale information are available to promote these products in hardware stores. Lardec Wood Stains are great value for money and offer proven performance for fencing and garden furniture, as well as doors and windows."

BOLD NEW COLOURS

There's an emphasis on new designs and colours for 2014 and Ronseal is aiming to satisfy that demand. Sorcha Heffernan of Ronseal Ireland believes that the company's diverse range will prove to be popular with customers. "We are very excited about our new Ultimate Decking Stain, which gives consumers a wide palette of colours to choose



from, such as slate and charcoal, while giving them the security of knowing that it will last twice as long as standard decking stains."

She added: "Our new Ultimate Decking Oils give a more natural finish with the same product performance. We have also launched some colour additions to the Woodland Colour range: Cherry Blossom and Spring Grass. These colours are very much on trend and will allow consumers to get creative with their garden furniture."

Along with these new colours, there is also a new Weatherproof 10-year exterior Wood Paint, which will be available this summer. The paint, which delivers long-lasting protection to doors and windows, comes in a wide range of contemporary colours. Ronseal recently announced that they are now selling Geocel and Dow Corning products in the Irish market. Ronseal believes that this line-up represents a perfect match for the Ronseal brand, as both are performance products with a proven track record.

SADOLIN DECKING STAIN & PROTECTOR

Part of the Crown Paints family, Sadolin has over 200 years of Scandinavian heritage behind it and offers a premium protection, all-in-one stain and protector for decking. According to Kevin Whelan, Marketing Controller, Crown Paints, the water-based Sadolin product contains UV active technology for hard-wearing, premium protection and provides excellent weather protection all year round. He adds: "It is quick and convenient achieving a rich, warm look. It is easy to apply and you can even apply two coats in one day." Sadolin Decking Stain & Protector is available in five shades – Natural, Golden Brown, Teak, Red Cedar and Ebony. Sadolin's extensive range of decking protection solutions includes Sadolin Decking Oil. According to Sadolin, this oil deeply nourishes for a natural finish that is water-repellent and UV-protected so wood won't grey in the sun. Sadolin Decking Oil resists mould and algae growth and recoats in four hours. Kevin notes: "It's a premium decking oil that enhances the natural beauty of wooden decks." Alternatively, you could use Sadolin Classic Wood Protection with a more extensive range of colours to protect timber decking. Sadolin advises that it is ideal also for use on cladding, garden buildings, fencing, trellis and pergolas. It





is available in Natural, Antique Pine, Redwood, Mahogany, Teak, Rosewood, Jacobean Walnut and Ebony. Another option is Sadolin Classic, a general purpose woodstain suitable as a two-coat application for decking or fencing. The brand also offers a quick-drying wood treatment, Sadolin Timberstain, formulated to protect and colour rough sawn timber sheds and fencing. This is available in five colours – Chesnut Brown, Ebony, Autumn Gold, Red Cedar and Forest Green.

TOOLS FOR THE JOB

Along with decking treatments, choosing the right type of decking screw is equally important. It must be of sufficient strength, suitable for outdoor use and offer protection against corrosion by pollution and rain. Irish Wire Ireland claim to have found the ideal product – the Spax decking screw with wirox coating. The protective coating on the Spax D-Wirox decking screw is accredited with corrosion category C4 classifications giving the product an estimated working life of 15 years, according to Louise Mulvihill, Business Development Executive of Irish Wire. The Spax Decking screw has a unique three-way action, Louise explains. Firstly, the patented ground serrations on the lower thread remove the need for pre-drilling. Then, the non-threaded shank allows the materials to bind together. Finally, the upper thread locks the deck-board securely. For further information on choosing the correct Spax screw visit www.spax.com. Customers who are seeking fencing material for applications in everything from agriculture and sports to industrial and residential usage, should look at brands such as Lippi, Rutland Electric Fencing, Fencemor, Gripple and Gatemate, according to Irish Wire. Visit www.irishwire.com for more information.

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Wood Concepts stock a wide range of timber products in the Port of Ringaskiddy.



One of the key goals for Tradewood is to ensure customers are getting the best quality and value possible.

TIMBER SECTOR RAISES THE BAR WITH NEW STANDARDS AND ENHANCED REGULATION

There is a sense of optimism around the hardware industry, currently and the timber sector reflects that positive mood Tradewood is expecting the confident sentiment to continue throughout the summer months.

"We can report on a much more positive feeling and a sense of new growth in the air," says Jason Thompson, Tradewood Ireland.

"There are new projects starting throughout Ireland at the moment and products such as plywood and timber are very much in demand at the moment.

TRANSFORMED TIMBER SECTOR

According to Jason, the timber sector is being transformed via the combination of a more discerning consumer and a strengthened regulatory framework: "Consumers want plywood that conforms to the highest possible standards, whether it is in relation to sustainable certification such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC). Equally it's vital that timber is legally sourced and compliant with European Timber Regulation (EUTR). "There are also new performance

standards regarding China Export markings and declarations of performances to which all Malaysian plywood must adhere.

At Tradewood, we have informed the Chinese suppliers that we work with to comply with these new regulations." There is a realisation among retailers that customers are becoming more selective and want the highest quality plywood and timber, Jason notes. One of the key goals for Tradewood is to satisfy this demand and ensure that customers are getting the best quality and value possible.

"That is one of our biggest goals," he explains. "Our aim is to maintain our standards and continually improve to keep up with new regulation. We are now stocking alternative sheet materials with various key advantages over plywood for fire protection and rot-proof properties."

WOOD CONCEPTS — GOING STRONG FOR 30 YEARS

Wood Concepts has a range of timber products that meet new

regulations introduced into the Irish marketplace this year, according to Joe Flynn. The introduction of these regulations, which include Euro Code 5, European Timber Regulation (EUTR) and construction product registration (CPR) certifications, means that specified products now must be of a certain standard before being used in construction.

"Wood Concepts stock a wide range of timber products in the Port of Ringaskiddy and distributes these to builders providers throughout Ireland," Joe explains. "We specialise in imported softwood timber, plywood from all major producing areas around the world, oriented strand board (OSB), and medium-density fibreboard (MDF) We have also added an I-joist system to our range. This I-Joist range is suitable for walls, roofs and floors and we feel it can become a market leader in new house construction."

All products are certified to EU, PEFC or FSC standards, are stamped to CPR regulations and comply with EUTR guidelines, according to Wood Concepts.

PHARMAPOS.IE – A PRESCRIPTION FOR POINT OF SALE IN HARDWARE STORES?

The company behind PharmaPOS, an online point of sale marketing tool is seeking to repeat its success in the pharmacy sector with expansion into hardware stores where it is already beginning to have an impact

Bill McConnell of Documation Ltd the company behind the point of sale product believes it is ideal for the hardware sector: "It's a simple to use web tool, designed for the creation of professional retail signage in your store to influence impulse buying. It's perfect for hardware stores and builders providers who want to encourage more business from their existing customers."

Today, more than ever, customers are looking for value. Every day, tradespeople are exposed to a myriad of promotions, pricing and special offers. Bill believes that only through effective point of sale can you clearly communicate to your customers the value and savings available at your store. Bill's POS system has already been proven to increase sales by up to 20 per cent in pharmacies, he says, and he is now introducing it in hardware and garden centre businesses.

SIMPLE TO USE

How does it work? "Once subscribed, you simply login at the point of sale website and select from hundreds of ready-to-use printables; including posters, flyers, banners, shelf-edge displays, offer stickers and more. Currently, pharmacies can choose from the database of thousands of product images provided and you can upload your own. Include the special offer details and then simply print to a standard desktop printer. All prints will include your store/branch logo and you can save your work into an archive for reuse." No graphic design experience is necessary, Bill notes. The system is currently being successfully used by over 400 pharmacies nationwide, with designated team members taking ownership of point-of-sale.

COUNTRYLIFE'S CONSISTENT SOLUTION

Glanbia Agribusiness has introduced the Documation system in its CountryLife stores, which specialise in homeware and garden products and the results have been excellent, according to James Byrne, Marketing Manager, Glanbia Countrylife. He says: "Our primary objective in choosing this POS system was to ensure consistency of branding and imagery across all our CountryLife stores. If individual stores have to produce their own point of sale signage, different templates can be used and, in general, it can lead to variation and inconsistencies. It also means there's a lot of unnecessary duplication of effort.

Using this system, we avoid all that. With this web-based tool, we can organise all point of sale via one portal in our central marketing office which, in turn, serves all our branches. The whole process is streamlined and efficient. In effect, we input all the point of sale details on the system before the product arrives in the branch, so point of sale material is ready immediately."

The system was introduced simultaneously in over a dozen CountryLife branches: "It took relatively little effort and was introduced in a couple of months. Our CountryLife branches have a lot of outdoor garden displays, so colour is vital to give added impact for their point of sale.

For that reason, we supplied each branch with a colour printer, so that each outlet could print full colour signage. We like the system and aim to role it out to all branches." To see how the system works, log on to www.pharmapos.ie For more information, contact Bill McConnell at bill@documation.ie or call 01 653 5008.



Examples of the point of sale system at a Countrylife store.

ENFORCING THE BUILDING CONTROL REGULATIONS

A spokesperson for the County and City Managers Association outlines the approach that the local authorities will be taking to enforcing the new regulations

Local authorities have extensive powers of inspection and enforcement under the Fire Services Act 1981, the Building Control Act 1990 and the Planning and Development Acts. In recent years we have seen many instances where local authorities have used these powers to address breaches of fire and safety requirements in homes and buildings. These powers are separate from the provisions of the Building Control Regulations which require owners, designers and builders to account for their statutory responsibility to design and construction in accordance with the Building Regulations.

What level of resources do the local authorities have to deploy in the enforcement of the regulations?

Each Local Authority is a Building Control Authority (BCA) for the purposes of these functions. The level of resources varies with authority size and this resource is no less affected by the general reduction of staffing of 25 per cent experienced by the

entire local government sector so as to affect the necessary reduction in expenditure on public services as determined by government. The strategy in these circumstances is to seek to share resources to the greatest extent possible. The development of the Building Control Management System as a collaboratively-managed initiative, within the Local Government Efficiency Review programme of shared services, enabled the development of a framework founded on the principle of 'default to digital' for new systems of administration that, despite the addition of new administrative processes and regulatory procedures, results in minimal additional costs per BCA for the introduction of the new system. In addition the introduction of a system for national coordination of delivery renders it possible to implement more consistent interpretation of regulation and improved action on enforcement through sharing of means for driving towards a culture of compliance within building sector.

How high a priority is the enforcement of these regulations?

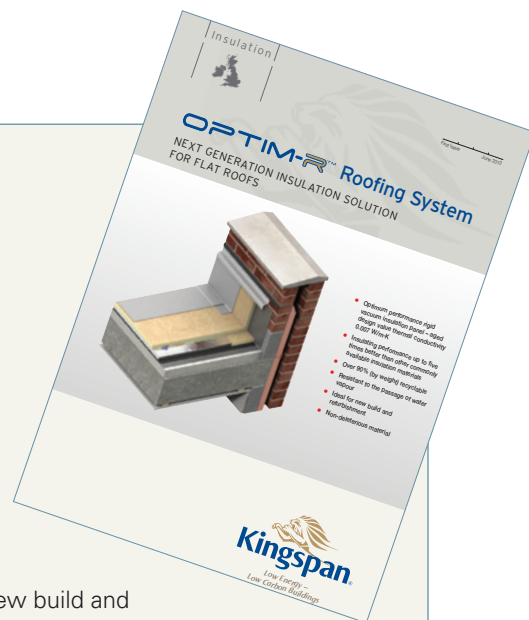
The compliance of construction practice with Building Regulations within the framework of the Building Control Regulations has been, and remains, the primary responsibility of building owners, designers and builders involved in any project. The role of the BCA was, and remains, as overseer of that compliance activity. This has no less priority than any other activity for which Local Authorities have responsibility. The improvement in the quality and quantity of information from commencement through to completion, together with the clearer definition of the relative responsibilities afforded through the revised regulations (SI 9 of 2014) renders this to be of a higher standard than heretofore, improving the means to deliver oversight to a significant degree.

KINGSPAN'S OPTIM-R TARGETS EVOLVING MARKET

Kingspan says its Optim-R Insulation will answer the requirement for a product that will meet the needs of architects in the evolving building market where designs are being pushed, spaces are being used more efficiently and new building regulations and sustainability guidelines are demanding more out of materials and products. Kingspan Optim-R comprises a rigid vacuum insulation panel with a micro porous core which is evacuated, encased and sealed in a thin, gas-tight envelope which gives outstanding thermal conductivity. Talking about the product launch, Alan Macklin, Technical Manager, Kingspan, said: "Optim-R Insulation rewrites the rulebook for architects. Now you don't have to worry about trying to squeeze insulation into plans, with Optim-R the product can be applied virtually anywhere within your design without impacting on space or performance."

He added: "For builders, it is resistant to the passage of water vapour, is ideal for new build and refurbishments and it can be used in walls, floors and roofing. For the home owner, Optim-R Insulation, if installed correctly, will last the lifetime of the building and help make substantial savings on fuel bills while helping them meet new building regulations.

For new-build applications, there are increasing regulatory requirements and economic reasons to improve energy efficiency." Kingspan also see the product offering advantages in the refurbishment sector, where there is, arguably, a greater need to keep constructions to a minimum thickness. For instance, in retrofit applications, Kingspan Optim-R provides solutions for areas that previously would have remained un-insulated because there was insufficient space available.





ANOTHER SIDE OF... Padraic Rogers

THE BEST LINES... IN STORE AND ON STAGE

Padraic Rogers, Managing Director of Rogers Topline, Ballymote Co Sligo, is widely known outside the business for his work in his local amateur drama society

Padraic, who, along with his brother, runs Rogers Topline, a builder's providers and hardware and plumbing suppliers, which will celebrate its 145th year in business in 2015, has not only enjoyed a successful business career, but is also known in the world of both television and the theatre. His love of acting was there from an early age, but it was only when he returned to his hometown of Ballymote that he began to explore this passion in greater depth. "To be honest, it was something that I fell into. When I came back home

from college I had some more spare time and things gradually progressed from there. In the beginning, I helped around backstage at a number of productions. I then went for a role in a play. I got the part, and things grew from there."

TV AND STAGE

Appearances on both *Bachelor's Walk* and *Hardy Bucks* in the early 2000s was the starting point for him and over the last number of years he has starred in a number of plays, such as *The Field*, *The Year Of The Hiker*, *The*

Cripple of Inishmaan, and *Juno and The Paycock*.

He has also acted in the All-Ireland Festival Circuit in 2008 and 2009. Padraic was Chair of the local theatre group for a number of years. Despite theatre taking a back seat to his other commitments over the last few years, Padraic is still keen to flex his acting muscles whenever time allows. "It is, and always will be, a big part of my life," he explains. "I have reduced the number of roles that I have taken on, but it will always remain a part of my life that's for sure."

B&G APPOINTMENTS

B&G's Adrian Carolan is pleased to announce a number of key senior appointments. Tom Cleary is appointed Chief Executive Officer, retaining responsibility for Sales. Tom's strong track record of sales and business development, and his commitment to customer service excellence, will be key in driving the business forward. Patrick Maher is appointed Chief Administration Officer, focusing on enhancing the company's infrastructure to underpin the on-going strategic development and growth of the business. Adrian Carolan now takes on the role of Chief Operations Officer. He will lead the Company's sourcing & procurement functions and will play a pivotal role in driving excellence in all aspects of company operations. B&G is very excited about these important strategic changes, which signal the beginning of a new phase of growth, ensuring that B&G is well positioned to deliver excellence for its many loyal customers.



HAIGS SEASON TEES OFF

The HAI Golfing Society's 2014 schedule got off to a successful start with two very well attended events in Athy and Limerick

HAI President Paddy Kelly's Prize

Sponsored by Crown Paints

The President's Prize event took place at Athy Golf Club on April 25, 2014.

OVERALL

- 1st. David Bolger 42pts (Handicap 22)
- 2nd. Michael McBride 41pts (H16)
- 3rd. Frank McKeown 39pts (H18)

CLASS 1

- 1st. Tim Lodge 39pts (H13)
- 2nd. John Phelan 36pts (H10)

CLASS 2

- 1st. Paddy Kelly 39pts (H16)
- 2nd. P J Gunn 36pts (H15)

CLASS 3

- 1st. Alex Taylor 38pts (H25)
- 2nd. Willie Dixon 35pts (H24)

FRONT 9

- Laurence Kelly 19pts (H23)

BACK 9

- Ray Colman 19pts (H20)

LADIES

- 1st. Kathleen Lynch 33pts (H16)
- 2nd. Brid Gunn 32pts (H23)
- 3rd. Barbara O'Connell 29pts (H21)
- 4th. Josephine Glennon 27pts (H21)

VISITORS

- 1st. Paddy Kingham 37pts (H18)
- 2nd. Fran Havelin 31pts (H22)

Denis Burke Memorial Cup

Sponsored by Bostik

The Denis Burke Memorial Cup took place at Ballykisteen, Limerick Junction, on May 30, 2014.

OVERALL

- 1st. Martin Rowe 39pts (back nine) (H8)
- 2nd. Liam Barrett 39pts (H12)
- 3rd. Willie Dixon 38pts (H24)

CLASS 1

- 1st. Niall Barry 32pts (back nine) (H9)
- 2nd. Brian Murphy 32pts (H12)

CLASS 2

- 1st. Jim Copeland 37pts (H15)
- 2nd. Paddy Kelly 35pts (H16)

CLASS 3

- 1st. Brian Wogan 32pts (H20)
- 2nd. Joe Nolan 27pts (H23)

LADIES

- 1st. Kathy O'Gorman 27pts
- 2nd. Marian Kelly 25pts
- 3rd. Josephine Glennon 23pts

FRONT NINE

- Tim Burke 19pts

BACK NINE

- Tom O'Connor 19pts

VISITORS

- 1st. Paul Boyce 42pts
- 2nd. Peter Morrissey 32pts



HAI President Paddy Kelly presents 1st prize to David Bolger at the HAI President's Day in Athy Golf Club.



HAI President Paddy Kelly; Kathleen Lynch, 1st prize winner, Ladies Competition; and Padraic Timlin, Director-General Manager, Crown Paints Ireland Limited, Event Sponsor at the HAI President's Day in Athy Golf Club.



Robert Massey, Managing Director, Bostik, Event Sponsor, presents 1st prize to Martin Rowe at the Denis Burke Memorial Day in Ballykisteen Golf Club.



Kathy O'Gorman receives 1st prize in the Ladies Competition from Robert Massey, Managing Director, Bostik, Event Sponsor, at the Denis Burke Memorial Day in Ballykisteen Golf Club.

OVERSEAS TRIP REMINDER

The 2014 Hardware Association Ireland overseas trip is to the heart of the lovely Catalonia region of Spain staying at the four-star TRYP Costa Dorada Port Cambrils Hotel. Organised by Sean Skehan World of Golf, the trip offers a great opportunity to join your colleagues and friends, and escape into miles of sun-drenched Mediterranean beaches just steps from the hotel.

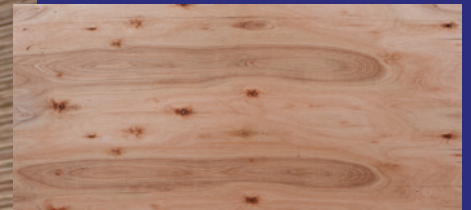
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