

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014

THE HAI HARDWARE JOURNAL

THE VOICE OF THE IRISH HARDWARE INDUSTRY



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DEAR READER,

As Autumn closes in, the Budget looms and HAI has been making a strong case to the government that, in its Budget 2015 measures, it should prioritise rural Ireland, where the national recovery is moving at a slower pace than in the larger cities and towns. For more on this, see our feature on page 16.

If you have concerns about the budget or our national recovery, in fact, if there's anything you feel strongly about, good or bad, right now, HAI would love to hear from you. There are several ways you can get in touch:

- Tweet HAI: @hardwareassoc;
- Visit HAI's LinkedIn page;
- Email annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie or jim@hardwareassociation.ie; and,
- Of course, you can call Annemarie or Jim at 353 1 2980969.

So, let's hear from you, there's no excuse!

Bernard Potter
Editor

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DOG CONTEST MAKES WAVES

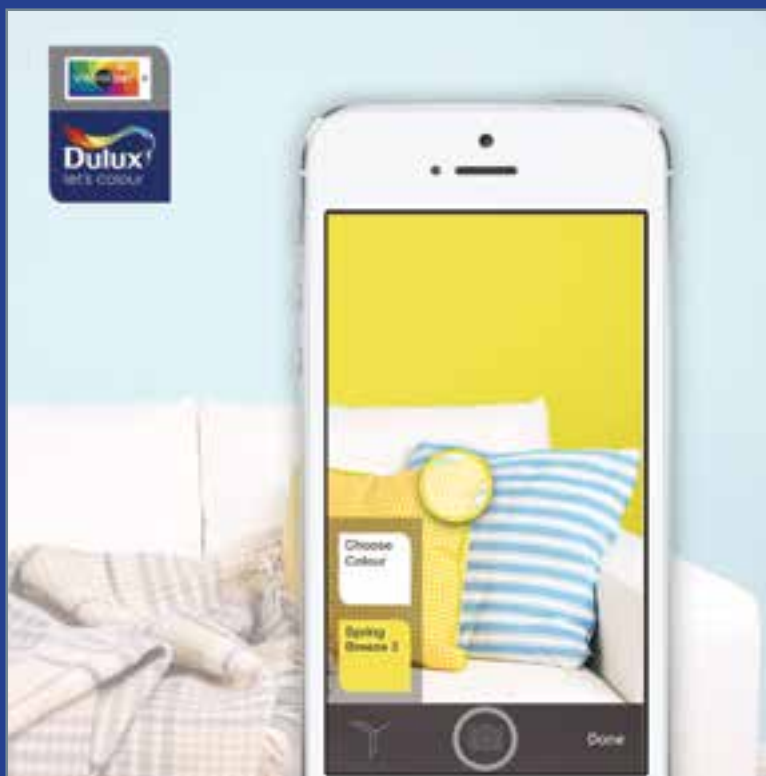
US store Klem's have an interesting idea for attracting pet owners to your store – the Dock Dogs event. Dogs and their owners from all over the community are invited to the store, where a pool and dock are set up in the field next door. Dogs compete in long jump and high jump contests, where they run off the dock and jump into the water, as well as retrieval contests.

Klem's held the event for the second year running in summer 2014. "The goal was to make it bigger and better than last year," says Jessica Bettencourt, President of Klem's. "Everyone loved it last year, but we'd learned a lot and wanted to do more with it this year. One thing we learned was that it was good to have other events happening at the same time, just to keep everyone's attention when their dogs weren't competing."

This year, Klem's teamed up with other local businesses and raffled off prizes, including the grand prize of a year's worth of dog food from the store.

The event was open to customers and their dogs, as well as anyone else in the community who wanted to bring their dogs to participate, or even just stop by and visit. "We have a big pet category with quite a few products," Bettencourt says. "Pet supplies is probably 10 to 15 % of our total sales, so it's a big category for us." (source: *Hardware Retailing*)

APP-Y DAYS AHEAD FOR COLOUR ADDICTS



The Dulux Visualiser app should be good news for colour addicts and creative painters everywhere. The Visualiser is a mobile augmented reality app which enables users to test colour their walls, while viewing the results live on their mobile device, as they move around the room. The tool is free for download on both IOS and Android

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Taking Care Of Business, the event for owners and managers of small businesses, and anyone who's thinking of starting a new business, takes place at Printworks Building, Dublin Castle, Dublin 2 on Thursday, October 16th, 2014. Over 30 State bodies will be available to give you information and advice on a range of services for business. By attending one of these events you have the opportunity to:

- Meet informally with representatives from a variety of State bodies;
- Get practical information and advice;
- Find out ways to save your business money; and,
- Get supports and tools to assist you in your business.

The event is free and you can register. Don't miss out, register for your place today. For more information go to

www.takingcareofbusiness.ie



Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton (right), and Minister of State at the Department, Gerald Nash (left), with Gina Quinn, CEO of Dublin Chamber of Commerce at the announcement of the Taking Care of Business event.

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BW HARDWARE LAUNCHES SONNATO COLLECTION

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BW450M

Dublin-based BW Hardware recently launched Sonnato, a range of contemporary, Italian-designed handles that are crafted in the Sonnato's state-of-the-art factory. BW Hardware, as Sonnato's distributor, now offers lock sets at competitive prices that come complete with handle/ easy reverse lock and a pair of Sonnato ball bearing hinges. BW Hardware can supply merchandising units and point of sale literature to customers intending to stock the new range.

MEET THE BUYER

IntertradeIreland, in association with its partner organisations is holding Meet the Buyer events in the Ramada Hotel in Belfast on October 22nd, 2014 and the Citywest Hotel, Dublin, November 12th. Throughout each of these events, there will be a number of opportunities to meet with public sector buyers from across the island at the Buyer stands. Also attending will be representatives from the key business agencies across the island who can advise you on current funding opportunities and business supports available. Find out more and register for this free event at

www.intertradeireland.com/public-procurement

NEW CIRET RANGE FROM EXCELLENCE

The new Ciret range, launched by distributors Excellence Ltd., includes the Kana Paint Brushes, Rota Rollers and the Prep range of decorating tools. Having the Ciret range of brushes, rollers and preparation products on your shelf will bring added value to your business, according to Excellence Ltd.



IT'S RODENT SEASON!

With the weather about to change as we enter the colder months, Pest-stop, the leading manufacturer and supplier of high quality pest control products, warns that rodents will be seeking out warmth and comfort from any available home or garden, invading homes and damaging property. When faced with any sign of rodents it is important to understand the most effective areas to place traps, when to lay poison and how regularly to check cages in order to deal with the problem quickly and humanely.

Indoors: Mice prefer to run along the edges of the room, keeping close to the walls. To find their routes look under dressers or in locations which gather dust, this will allow you to see footprints and place traps in their regular runs. **Outdoors:** Place plastic bait stations adjacent to the rat runs or against fences and sheds. Rats like moisture and need water.

Cages/Humane traps: The placement of cages or humane traps should be placed as above, however these must be checked on a regular basis to ensure there is no distress caused to the animal. Ensure that there is food, water and shelter available.

For more info please visit: www.pest-stop.co.uk



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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KILSARAN ACQUIRES CEMEX OPERATING ASSETS IN IRELAND

Kilsaran International has acquired a number of major Cemex operating assets in the Republic of Ireland, positioning it as a national player in the concrete, blocks and aggregates business.

The acquisition will see Kilsaran, which celebrates its 50th birthday this year, expand beyond its Leinster origins, having been founded by the late Patrick McKeown in the village of Kilsaran in County Louth in 1964.

The company has secured ownership of Cemex plants in Cork, Tipperary, Limerick, Waterford, Wexford, Portlaoise, Ballinakill, Castletown, Duleek, and Dublin.

David McKeown, Sales Director of Kilsaran International, said the company is 'delighted to finally spread the production and supply capabilities of the company into these new geographic locations'. He added that the company is looking forward to working with new and old customers over the coming months.

Expansion into these new areas also means an enhanced supply capacity for Kilsaran's paving and dry products divisions.

NEW BUILDING SUPPORT PACKAGE

A new building support service has been developed by Kingspan Insulation, which will give certifiers, and homeowners, some piece of mind when it comes to the standard of home insulation installed. Kingspan Premium and Premium Plus Service, comprise this free support package, aimed at reassuring the building professional that the insulation installed is of the highest standard. There are two levels of service depending on the project, and relevant requirements. To qualify for the Premium Service a design must achieve $<0.15\text{W/m}^2\cdot\text{K}$ weighted average U value, and use Kooltherm in at least two building elements (e.g. wall, roof). The Premium Plus Service requirement is a U value of $<0.13\text{W/m}^2\cdot\text{K}$ while using Kooltherm in at least three applications. The Premium Service includes: consultation service; pre-tender KoolSpec Check Service; project-specific warranty; U-value calculations/condensation risk analysis; response within 24 hrs to all issues; performance specifications; and, two site inspection visits. The Premium Plus Service includes: a consultation service; performance specifications; site visit by Kingspan technical representative; five site inspection visits; U-value calculations/condensation risk analysis; pre-design assessment of details; response within 24 hrs to all issues; certification of installation; BER/SAP calculations; pre-tender KoolSpec check service; toolbox talk/installation training; project-specific warranty. A fully detailed brochure is available on www.kingspaninsulation.ie/premium.

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JUNIOR
collection

NEW QUICK DRY WOOD FILLER LAUNCHED

A new quick-drying wood filling product has been introduced to the market. Johnstone's Trade has added Quick Dry Woodfiller to its woodworks range, which aims to provide decorators with a full preparation and protection system for interior and exterior wood projects. The new water-based product provides a solution for decorators carrying out remedial work on damaged wood substrates. With a touch-dry time of just 30 minutes it can be painted over, or stained quickly, significantly reducing time on site. The Quick Dry Woodfiller sits alongside Johnstone's Knotting Solution as one of two products designed to prepare the wood.



Olive Payne from Clara, Co Offaly, who qualified at the Tullamore Show was the winning entry in the Fleetwood All Ireland Amateur Art Competition. She was presented with her prize at the Virginia Agricultural Show, Cavan on September 15. Pictured from left: Eithne Barry, Chief Steward Fleetwood Arts; Catherine Gallagher, Irish Shows Association Representative, National Board; Jim Harrison, Irish Shows Association President; Olive Payne, winner; Minister Heather Humphreys; and Steven McQuillan, Marketing Manager, Fleetwood Paints Ltd. Photo: Lorraine Teevan

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ELMER'S ESSENTIALS – RETAILING TIPS

Elmer Kerr shares his tips on enhancing turnover and profit. Elmer is Sales & Marketing Director of PMM, Ireland's leading merchandising and retail marketing consultants. Elmer is currently leading The Beacon Initiative, a retailer development programme in Co. Cork.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Having worked closely for the past year with in excess of 70 retail businesses in towns throughout Co. Cork, PMM just cannot emphasise enough the importance of the customer's first impression when passing the shop, looking in the front window, or entering the premises to enquire, browse or purchase something.

Every customer forms an opinion of the business within a very short space of time – probably within the first minute. This is generous, considering they form an opinion within the first eight seconds of clicking on a web site.

Think of the importance of signage, colours, stock displays, store layout, busy atmosphere, friendly looking staff and, dare I say it, special offers.

Our experience working with retailers on the Cork Beacon Programme clearly shows that store owners and managers don't spend enough time daily/weekly on the visual side of their business.

Housekeeping can be neglected because they didn't have time to inspect the store first thing every morning. Stock lies on shelves with no price tickets, some shelves are empty of stock because staff didn't have time to put out new products. Trust me, stock doesn't sell particularly well lying in a storeroom.

Signage inside the store is so important as it prompts customers. Even signs with standard messages such as: great offer; value-for-money; price reduced; clearance sale; today's special offer; final day sale, should be used as they all add up to that great customer experience.

Signage helps create an impression that lingers in customers' heads long after they have left the store. It inspires them to promote you and your store by word-of-mouth – that is a free advertising campaign that very few retailers buy into unfortunately. First impressions? We call them lasting impressions!

More helpful hints from Elmer in the next edition...

ENERGY EFFICIENT RANGE



A range of energy efficient domestic circulators is available from Grundfos, that will make replacement installation less of a headache.

The UPS2 is a compact, high efficiency, replacement for the Grundfos UPS 15-50/60 circulator pumps. Just one model can be used to replace 4m, 5m and 6m versions in domestic heating systems.

The ALPHA2L is designed for circulating water in domestic heating systems with constant or variable flows and in systems with variable temperature. These high efficiency circulators can be installed in central heating and primary hot water circuits up to 35kW and offer many advanced features.

ALPHA2 circulator is one of the most advanced domestic circulators available and offers all the benefits of the ALPHA2L plus the patented AUTOADAPT setting for easy set-up and to ensure the best efficiency against changes in the system demand, as well as an LED display that shows power on and the electrical usage.

All models come with a five year warranty as standard.



60 SECOND INTERVIEW

SEAMUS ENNIS

Seamus Ennis is MD of EEC Hardware in Balbriggan.

1. Are you an optimist?
Mostly, yes.
2. Business leader you most admire?
Alan Sugar.
3. Biggest lesson learned in business?
Proceed with caution.
4. Best business book you have read?
What You See Is What You Get, by Alan Sugar.
5. Advice to fledgling entrepreneurs?
Do as much research as possible.
6. Who is your greatest inspiration in life and/or business?
James A. MacCann, businessman.
7. Apple or Android?
Apple.
8. Most useful app?
GAA app.
8. Favourite song/band?
Level 42.
9. Favourite pastime?
Hurling.
10. Favourite food?
Sweet and sour chicken.
11. Favourite holiday destination or part of the world?
Orlando, Florida.
12. Four dinner guests dead or alive?
Alan Sugar, Michael O'Leary, Jack Dempsey (boxer) and Noel McPartlin (body builder).

DIY A PRIORITY – EURO HOME REPORT

Our homes are our castles and whether you own a one-bed apartment or a five-bed family home, a homeowner's work is never done.

An interesting report published in August 2014 by leading European home improvement retailer, Kingfisher, has shown some varied attitudes towards people's homes, and their approaches to maintaining and improving them. Kingfisher's European Home Report captured responses from more than 17,000 men and women.

The survey covered France, the UK, Ireland, Poland, Spain, Russia, Romania, Turkey and Germany, representing a total population of 537 million.

It was clear from the report that home improvement is high on the agenda with nearly all adults (86%) doing some form of DIY, or home improvement. There

was also a wide range of motivations, plans and fears about the home. Four main themes emerged from the survey. Firstly, modern homes are changing and with increasing pressure on space, people want to adapt their homes to changing lifestyles and demographic shifts, and are seeking to create more versatile spaces that are adapted to modern living.

Secondly, spending on the home is back on the agenda after several years during which the economic downturn and austerity measures affected home improvement budgets.

The third significant factor is increasing energy bills, which, in the broader European context, are now people's number one concern about their homes. And finally, the report shows that people's attitudes to DIY and their

ability to undertake certain jobs vary enormously by country.

For example, the Germans are the most likely to undertake a major structural job, such as building an extension, whereas the Turkish are the least confident DIY-ers.

The British continue to be the gardeners of Europe, according to the European Home Report's findings while the Poles are the most likely to have a go at installing a full central heating system. On the DIY Confidence Leaderboard, Ireland placed seventh of nine!

For the full report go to:
www.kingfisher.com/files/reports/2014/european_home_report/european_home_report.pdf

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DIY confidence:

Confidence in doing DIY ourselves varies significantly from country to country, with Germany and France leading the way.

The DIY confidence Leaderboard:

- 1st Germany, France
- 3rd Poland
- 4th Russia
- 5th Spain, UK
- 7th Ireland
- 8th Romania
- 9th Turkey

We love DIY:



86% enjoy DIY



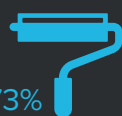
42% say DIY is rewarding



36% say it provides a sense of achievement

Top 5 skills in Europe:

1



73%

Painting & decorating

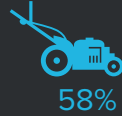
2



73%

Assembling flat pack furniture

3



58%

Cutting the lawn

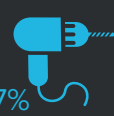
4



57%

Unblocking the loo

5

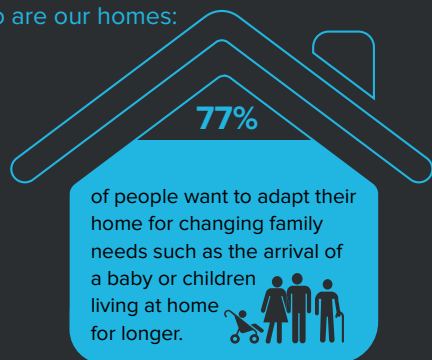


57%

Putting up shelves

The adaptable home:

Our families are changing, therefore so are our homes:

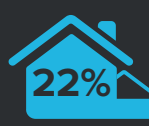


Home improvement priorities in the next five years:



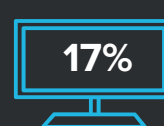
31%

Energy efficiency



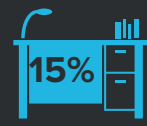
22%

More space



17%

Space for 'entertainment'



15%

'Working-from-home'

Spending on the home back on the agenda:

Following a tough economic period people are on average planning three home projects in the year ahead – from redecorating to adding extensions. The Russians are planning the most.

Home improvement is again seen as a value creator:

More than two thirds of Europeans (68%) are making home improvement changes to increase the value of their home. This is a big shift from the 17% recorded in 2012.



In the next 12 months Europe's top project priorities are:



40%

Painting and decorating



21%

Gardening



18%

Lighting



17%

New kitchen or renovation

Member satisfaction survey 2014

DOING WELL, BUT WILL TRY HARDER

Thanks to all those members who kindly completed this survey which was open between September 3rd and 12th. The last time we surveyed the members on this subject was in 2011. Whilst we understand that surveys may be sent out from all sections of our community frequently and that they may be a drain on your time, your participation is very important to us as a member driven association.

We received a response rate of 27% which is a good sample to work with but we'll definitely need to work harder on member engagement over the next few months and years to ensure that we are supporting and representing our members and strategically planning for the future.

Here's a snapshot of what you told us and our response:

- Over 90% of you have been members for over six years.

We welcome your loyalty and support particularly over these last few years when business has been very tough. We commit to never taking this for granted and to working even harder on your behalf.

- You rank our sharing of industry information, promoting the industry and lobbying and representing the industry as the most important services we provide.

We will concentrate on key policy issues, source best practice in the industry, focus on achievement and consult with you regularly.

- You told us you would participate in a retail sales index, trade visits and would like to see a 'standard' established as a mark of credibility in the industry.

We aim to be forward thinking and establish excellence in our industry through the services we provide.

- Almost 70% of you would recommend HAI to colleagues in the industry.

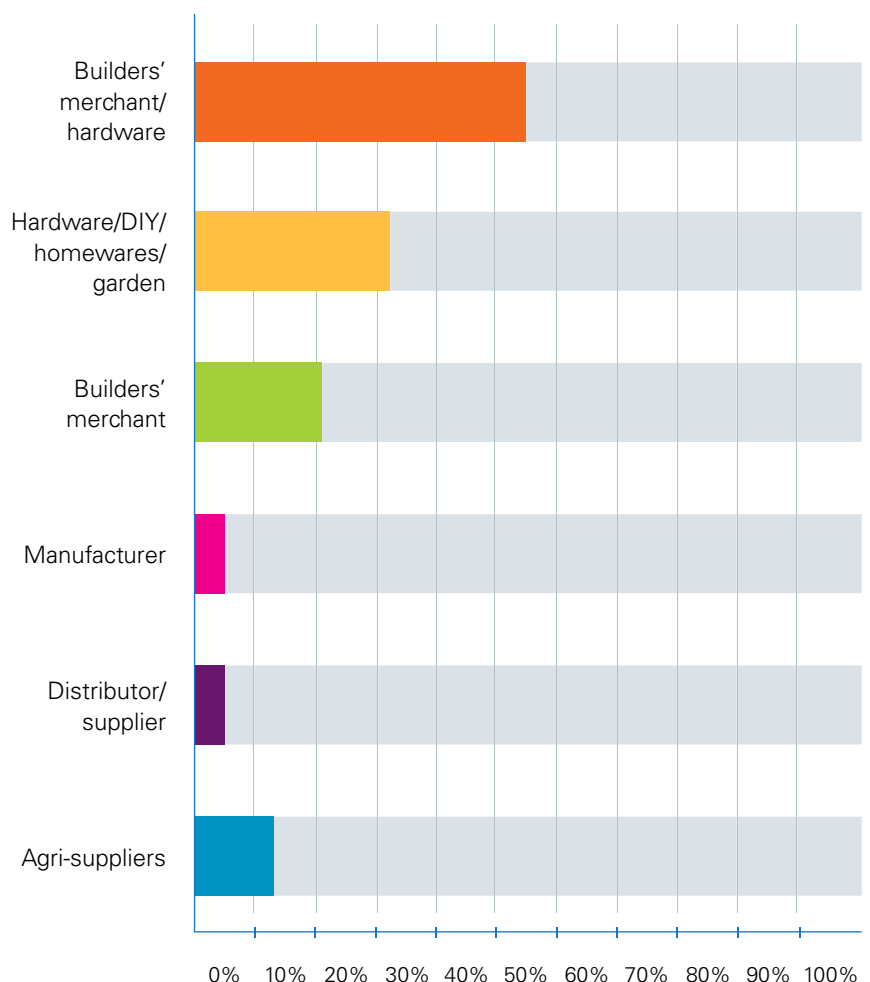
We say that's not good enough! We promise to grow this association so that it is more valuable and relevant to all of you. You are our sales force and we need you to be 100% confident and proud of your product.

- You rank our magazine, website and email updates as the most important method of communications.

We pledge to improve, increase and simplify our communication channels both to you as members and all our various stakeholders

If there is any specific aspect of the association that you'd like to discuss in more detail please contact Annemarie on **083 186 4135** or annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie

HAI members by type of business





THE PERFECT FIT



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Reliability and efficiency
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THE UPS2 25-50/60

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enhanced for easier fitting

SMARTER

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The latest range of reliable Grundfos circulators is now on its way to your local merchant. Offering not only traditional Grundfos quality but now also bigger sizes and easier installation compared to previous models, plus class leading efficiency, the new range is the **PERFECT FIT** for your next installation. For more information please visit www.grundfos.ie

be
think
innovate

GRUNDFOS

HAI CALLS FOR RENOVATION INCENTIVE EXTENSION

Hardware Association of Ireland (HAI) is calling on the Government to extend the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) scheme beyond 2015, in its budget submission.

The scheme, which was introduced after the last budget, is due to expire at the end of 2015 and according to HAI, it has helped to maintain employment in the hardware sector, and has helped increase employment levels among builders.

Recent Revenue calculations reveal that as of September 15th, 2014, the value of the works registered is €171m, with an average value of €16,500. However the bulk of the work registered for the scheme to date is focused in the Dublin/Leinster area (77 %). HAI believes an extension would allow time for awareness of the scheme to increase. HAI says it is prepared to assist in the promotion of the scheme, as its members are a key point of contact with consumers and builders requiring building material and household goods. The extension of the HRI scheme was a key aspect of HAI's overall Budget 2015 submission, which contains six proposals for consideration.

FUEL VOUCHER SCHEME

Additionally, HAI would like to see the introduction of a voucher system for the winter fuel allowance, whereby people currently receiving the allowance would have to use a dedicated fuel voucher/smart card to purchase a fuel product only from registered and tax compliant retail fuel outlets.

Currently paid as a cash top up to 410,000 recipients, the €20 allowance

Patrick Kelly, President, Hardware Association Ireland (HAI) and MD of Tegral (second from left) presents the Association's Budget 2015 submission to Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan, with Kieran Burke, HAI Board Member and Purchasing Director of Grafton Merchanting ROI (left) and Hugh O'Donnell, HAI Vice-President and Chief Executive of Amalgamated Hardware plc (right).

ROOM TO IMPROVE

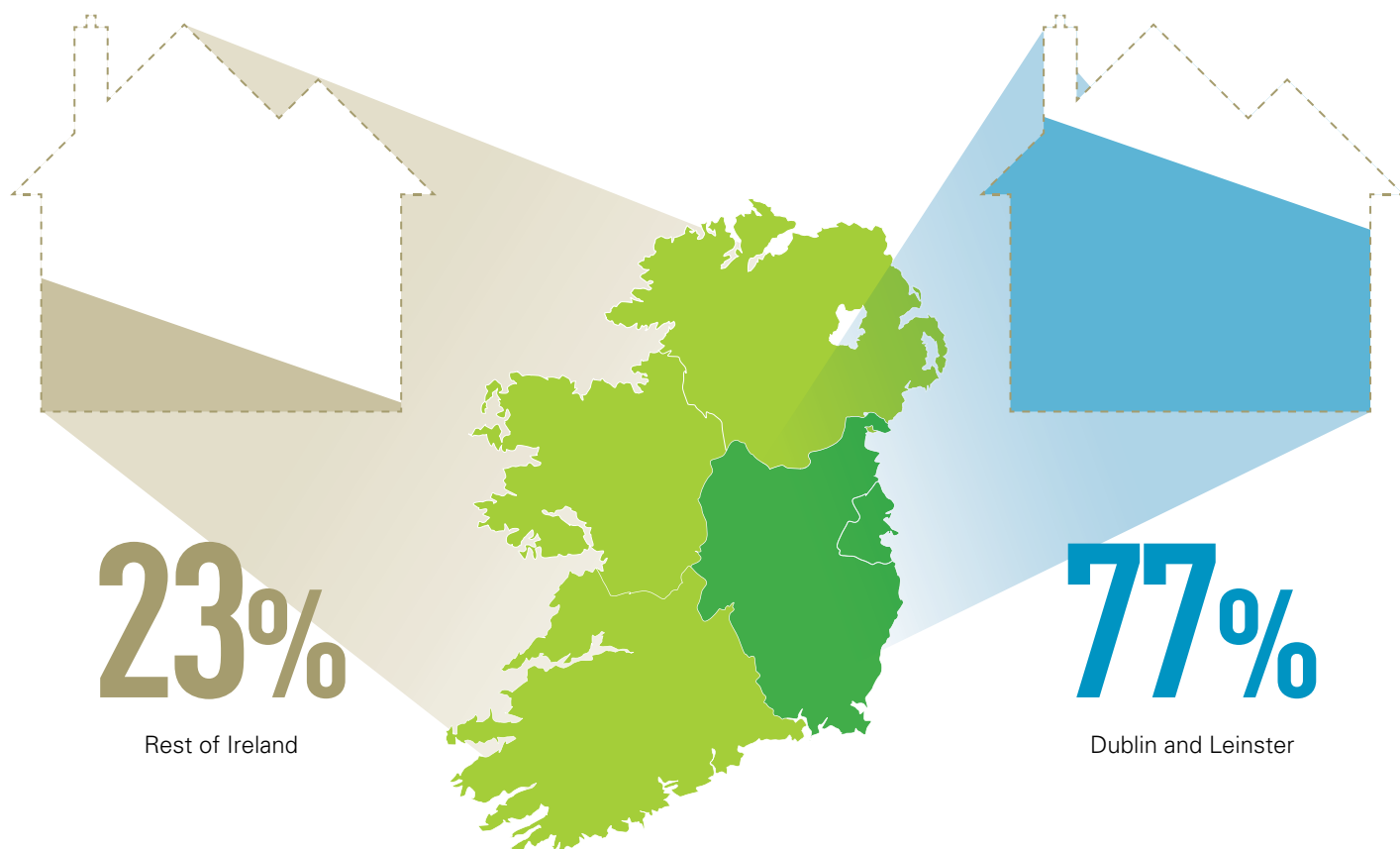


Fig 1: Recent Revenue calculations reveal that as of September 15th, 2014, the value of the works registered with the HRI is €171M with an average value of €16,500. However the bulk of work registered for the scheme to date is focused in the Dublin/Leinster area.

can be spent on anything, not exclusively solid fuel, and from any source of supply without any traceability or recovery for the State. A fuel voucher scheme would allow the Government to recoup some of the €211m the allowance currently costs the state, through legitimate outlets' tax returns. It would also ensure that the money is spent with legitimate suppliers and not those operating in the shadow economy and ensure that the payment is fully used to help reduce fuel poverty.

UK STIMULUS SCHEMES

The Department of Finance has been asked to consider a mortgage insurance scheme similar to the Help-To-Buy Scheme in the UK. HAI is asking the Department to go one further and consider a scheme that incorporates some help-to-build also. The availability and accessibility of appropriately zoned land to meet

current demands is vital, according to HAI. But unlike the UK where the threshold is £600,000, HAI would recommend that the threshold for an Irish scheme should be lower to focus first on the family-type home in areas of need and disadvantage. HAI is also encouraging Government to examine a second UK scheme that could benefit small builders and SMEs in obtaining working capital. The Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme is a pilot scheme in the UK that enables trade customers to apply for a credit account of up to £25,000 from designated builders' merchants. The pilot scheme is being backed by the UK Government with a multi-million pound fund in order to stimulate viable small and sole trader construction businesses and in an effort to provide alternatives to bank lending. HAI says it would be a willing partner in the promotion of such a scheme here in Ireland.

MICROENTERPRISE LOAN

HAI's budget submission also proposes an expansion and greater promotion of the Microenterprise Loan Fund scheme, and a revamp of social welfare conditions, introducing incentives to job seekers to apply for seasonal temporary employment positions. The existing Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme, introduced in October 2012, originally intended to provide over €90m in extra lending to 5,500 businesses and create an estimated 7,700 jobs over a 10- year period. The latest report, up to March 31, 2014, after a year and a half in operation, shows that only €3m in loans have been approved and 437 net jobs created in 192 businesses. According to HAI, only 51% of applications have been approved and 83% of the approvals were for businesses employing three people or less. HAI believes these figures are

STRATEGY DOCUMENTS CAN HELP RURAL IRELAND

HAI welcomes strategy documents

Hardware Association of Ireland (HAI) has welcomed two strategy documents published by CEDRA (Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas) and the Government, in recent months. CEDRA's report Energising Ireland's Rural Economy published in April, and the Government's Construction 2020 Strategy for Ireland published in May, were positively received by HAI because they deal with three of the fundamental policy needs that impact on the business of its members. HAI's Budget 2015 proposal was based on these policy issues including: the need to rebalance economic activity with a greater focus on rural Ireland; stimulating the building/construction industry; and, the availability of credit/loan finance. The CEDRA Report has over 30 excellent recommendations which would energise the social and economic life in rural Ireland. A number of the recommendations made in this study could be implemented immediately without any significant cost to the State. For example, Recommendation 8, calls on State agencies to strengthen their collaboration to bring small and niche FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) to rural areas. Allied to the need to energise rural economic conditions is the need to stimulate consumer spending with the inevitable benefit of increasing employment, particularly among SMEs. In rural Ireland, 92% of economic activity is generated by SMEs. Construction 2020 contains 75 specific actions and while it is welcome it will take some time for any benefits to accrue. The change proposed in the strategy for the National Pension Reserve Fund (NPRF) to become the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) and have the ability to invest in commercial activities is one very welcome proposal.

so far off the original target that it is clear a revamp is required.

The current eligibility thresholds for micro businesses are that they have been declined bank credit, employ less than 10 people and have turnover less than €2m. HAI wants the criteria to be changed to include companies employing up to 20 employees with a turnover of up to €5m. HAI welcome the availability of loans between €2,000 and €25,000, but says they must be promoted and made available to all companies within retail, especially in the hardware, building material, and DIY sectors where the economic downturn has been most evident.

HAI want to see local enterprise offices work in partnership with Micro Finance Ireland to proactively assist with training and guidance in preparing the applicant's business plan, including initial evaluation of the quality of the business proposal for the loan application, mentoring, and advice on an on-going basis. Regarding opportunities for job-seekers to take up temporary positions, HAI believes the current situation, whereby temporary, seasonal positions are not taken up by the unemployed due to the fact that it can take upwards of six weeks to re-register on the live register, is archaic. The hardware, building materials, DIY industry can create thousands of part-time positions at peak trading periods including Summer and Christmas, says HAI.

"There is a need to rebalance economic activity with a greater focus on rural Ireland; stimulate the building and construction industry and provide greater availability of credit and loan finance," said HAI President, Patrick Kelly. "Allied to the need to energise rural economic conditions is the need to stimulate consumer spending with the inevitable benefit of increasing employment," he added. "Another context for our proposals is combating the shadow economy. VAT and employment legislation compliance continues to be a huge threat to many businesses in our sector. Government must rigorously enforce VAT compliance, with particular attention to the illegal use of legitimate VAT numbers in Northern Ireland, where major project products including timber for roofs, bathroom suites, windows and flooring products, are purchased using someone else's VAT number."

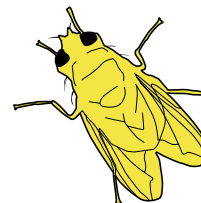
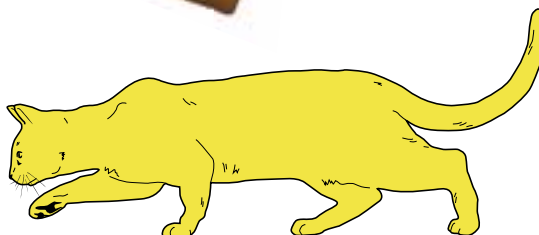
The full HAI Budget 2015 Submission can be found at www.hardwareassociation.ie



Pest-Stop are proud to announce our exciting new venture with one of Ireland's largest, most established distribution companies; Allegro Garden & Leisure.

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- POS support
- End user support
- Offers and promotions



Annemarie Harte took up her role as Chief Executive Officer with Hardware Association Ireland in August. The former Secretary and Chief Executive of Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland spoke to *The Hardware Journal* and shared some insights about her background, her new role and revealed the first hard knock she experienced as CEO!

HARTE'S DELIGHT ENCOURAGING START FOR NEW CEO

Q: When did you take up your new role?

A: I joined Hardware Association Ireland at the beginning of August and within a couple of days had fallen down the steps of the entrance into the building where the Association's office is housed! The irony wasn't lost on me – my fall could have been avoided by some anti-slip paint and there, unwittingly, began my journey into the largely unknown.

Q: What are the key strengths you bring to the job as CEO?

A: I'm hoping it was my beguiling charm and free-flowing wit that did it but suspect that it may have been my previous experience of working as CEO in an association that had 53,000 members covering the UK and Ireland. My focus there was on implementing organisational change, strategy creation, team management and, most importantly, understanding members' needs and supporting them with the best services we could provide.

Q: So why does this matter when it comes to HAI?

A: HAI has been weathering a storm over the last number of years which is not uncommon in member-based organisations. A members' organisation is quite unique in structure and service delivery needs to be valuable and relevant in order for members to continue to voluntarily sign off the subscription fee every year. When times are hard and revenue is tight, organisations like ours will come under intense scrutiny and rightly so.

Q: Did you have a particular yearning to work in the hardware industry?

A: No. My motivation as far as my career is concerned has always been to seek out a challenging role, make a difference, come away with a set of results and, of course, pay the bills! I am performance-oriented and highly competitive (I still hold the record of most wins in Connect 4 at school). If you're on my team we're

not just there to participate, we're there to win (I also recently led a team to victory in the local farmers' table quiz). I'm confident this winning formula can just as easily be applied to the hardware industry.

Q: Do you know anything about hardware?

A: Very little. Although I'm proud that I have owned a tool box since I was 21, can change a plug, know how to handle a bottle of white spirit and know how to unblock a sink, successfully. More importantly, I have joined this organisation with no baggage, no dictates and no agenda other than to make it a success, and by that I mean establishing a buoyant member base, valuable services and making HAI the 'go to' organisation for all things hardware and allied trades. What has brought a smile to my face since I joined is reviving the memories of childhood trips with my Dad to Lenehan's, Brooks and Dockrells – I'll be popping in again soon.





Q: How are you going to go about reviving HAI?

A: By listening and learning. The nuns regularly reminded us we had two ears to listen. By doing research with members, lapsed members and potential members. By understanding our communications tools. By cutting our cloth, working within the capacity we have. By focusing. I read an interview with Gavin Slark recently where he was quoted as saying "We need to be brilliant at core areas, rather than average at a number of things." I couldn't agree more, I've long since given up trying to be all things to everyone, it doesn't work and it doesn't matter either.

Q: What has the first six weeks been like?

A: I would sum that up in one word – encouraging. There is plenty to work on and work with. There have been so many offers of help and support I'm blessed. I am lucky to have a very knowledgeable and devoted colleague

to work with. I have an incredibly supportive President and Executive to work with too. I bring bags of energy to this role and am eager to get on with meeting the members but recognise I need to get the house in order first, or a little home improvement you might say.

Q: Any frustrations?

A: Golf. Golf. Golf. I find it fascinating how Ireland can attract some of the biggest global firms to our shores, educate our children to the highest standards and generally be the land of saints and scholars but if you don't play golf as part of your commercial apparatus you're supposedly doomed. No (before you ask) I won't be golfing.

Q: What do you do when not building your knowledge of all things hardware?

A: I am a mother first and foremost although soon to be redundant. My longest held sporting love is rugby and earliest memory was when Michael Kiernan drop-goaled for Triple Crown success in 1985. I enjoy and feel compelled to volunteer and, now that I have moved back permanently from the UK, will be pursuing this with a couple of humanitarian organisations I've targeted.

Q: And finally what does success look like?

A: Moving on when the job's done!

To learn more about me and what I hope to achieve for HAI, please contact me on **083 186 4135** or **Annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie**. Follow Hardware Association Ireland on its new page on LinkedIn or on Twitter **@hardwareassoc**

THE HARDWARE SHOW 2015

HOME - GARDEN - BUILD - DIY

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Commenting on progress to date, HAI Chief Executive Annemarie Harte says: "With stand bookings already well ahead of our forecast we have recently added an additional 25% of stand space to the show and this is already nearly all allocated! There is no doubt that the positivity in the marketplace is reflected in the excitement and anticipation for our

showcase event next February. Our events committee are continuing to meet regularly and are focused not just on building the scale and size of the show but also in creating a host of value added reasons why our merchants from around the country should attend. Watch out for more information on our new Innovation Awards which will be chaired by

former Dragon's Den regular Sean Gallagher. The Information Exchange area will host presentations which merchants can drop in to and hear about topics ranging from store merchandising to building a social media campaign around your store. And, of course, the President's Ball will take place on the Sunday evening after day one of the show.

Visitor registration goes live!

Get your ticket to the event of 2015 and avoid the queues by simply logging on to our website www.haishow.ie and registering. Why not forward the link to a colleague also. Once you register you will also receive regular updates regarding new products launched at the event, the event timetable, and other important information which will allow you to plan your visit. Be warned this is our largest Hardware show in many years – so please take the time to plan your visit and leave yourself enough time to maximise your visit.

Book your accommodation now!

Don't leave it too late to book your overnight accommodation at the adjoining Citywest Hotel. We have negotiated special show rates – simply quote Hardware Association Ireland Show 2015 when you make your reservation with the Hotel.

Limited stand space available – don't miss the boat

A glance at the exhibitor list to date will show you that next year's HAI Hardware event is indeed a true representation of all sectors within the Hardware Industry and, for a supplier, an opportunity not to be missed. If your company has a new product or innovation to launch into the market then there can be no more cost-effective way than by participating next February. Contact our Event partners today and become part of the success story. Call Margaret Andreucetti at Eventhaus 00353 1 8460020 or email margaret@eventhaus.ie. Be advised this show will reach capacity at Citywest, so make that call today!

Where, When, and Who?

Where – Citywest Event Centre

When – February 15th & 16th

Who – For more information contact:

Margaret Andreucetti at Eventhaus

Tel 00353 1 846 0020, margaret@eventhaus.ie; or,

Jim Copeland at HAI

Tel 00353 1 298 0969,

jim@hardwareassociation.ie

THE HARDWARE SHOW 2015

HOME - GARDEN - BUILD - DIY

ABC Abrasives	B28	Intact Software	A1
Amalgamated Hardware	D16	Independent Fencing	G6
Ashtown Trading	F14	IITC	D17
Ames True Temper Ltd	E2	IKO Ltd.	G2
Aquasource Distributors	T8	Irish Cement	E14
Arc Building Products	B3	Irish Wire Products	D22
Assa Abloy	H8	JBKey	F37
Blackspur	C16/C20	John Murphy Castlereagh	D6
BAT Metalworks	A5	Keystone Group	C26
Bord Na Mona	D20	Kilsaran	A2
Bostik Industries Ltd	E6	Lagan Group	G8
Calor Gas Ltd	F12	Larsen	F20
Canadia	OS1	Laydex	R10
CCEC	S7	McLoughlins	T1/T3
Central Key	B30	Mercer Agencies	S1/S3
Centurion	C29	N and C Enterprises	C28
Classic Hardware	F10	Net Watch	A3
Clongrennan Lime	A21	NIKO	D28
ColorTrend	G7	Olympic Fixings	A29
Contech	E13	Petersons	G23
CPL Fuels	A18	Power Home Products	G21
Crown Paints	E10	Regatta Professional	A14
Curust Industries	E22	Rawlplug	F2
Deanta Doors	H12	Rhino Distribution	S5
DFE	E28	RNH	T11
D S Supplies	C22	Ronseal	C10/C14
John Dargan & Sons	B15	Saint Gobain	B22/B26
Donal Lynch Hardware	F38	Sasta Hardware	G1
Dosco	B9/B13	Snickers	C11
Draper Tools	A17	John Stafford & Sons	T9
Duracell	A6	Tegral	D14
Dulux	C2	TIMCO	C13
Earthridge	E30/F29	Tuck Fasteners	D14
Ecocem	D15	Tucks O'Brien	B2/B6
Everbuild	E20	TW Clarke	T7/T6
Fleetwood	B16/B20	UEL	C6
Frisco UK	H2/H6	United Hardware	D10
Galco Steel	G29	Varian I S & Co Ltd	F23
Gorilla Glue	B14	Waterford Stanley	J2
Henkel	F13	Westaro Hosing	A28
Henley Stoves	G12	Whiteriver Group	S6
ICON Building Products	J14	Xthrathern	D26



Richard, Val and
Vincent Cummins, outside
the Ballinrobe store.

Achieving a balance between trade and retail customers has been key to the success of Cummins Homevalue, which operates stores in Ballinrobe and Claremorris

A TALE OF TWO STORES

The story of Cummins Homevalue in south county Mayo could be characterised as a tale of two stores. The first of these, a long established hardware store in Ballinrobe, dates back to 1958 when Val Cummins opened its doors for business as a General Merchants providing a range of services to the local community. The General Merchants evolved to become a traditional builder providers and farm supplies store, and today Cummins & Sons Homevalue is synonymous with specialist expertise across the trade and agricultural services spectrum. Run by company directors Richard and Vincent Cummins, the Ballinrobe store is now making inroads in the retail market as well, with a growing business in plumbing and heating, paint, electrical, furniture and lighting, and homewares.

The development of the retail side of the Ballinrobe business is due in no small part to the influence of the second Cummins Homevalue store, the department store style outlet based in Claremorris retail park. Around 2004, Richard and Vincent began planning for growth in the business and made the strategic decision to develop retail as part of their operations.

The Claremorris store began trading in December 2006 and officially opened in November 2007, with Elaine Fahy coming on board as Retail Manager and Seasonal and Homewares Buyer. The emphasis on retail is immediately evident in the Claremorris outlet, with a keen focus on the ambience and atmosphere of the shopping experience. And this focus on the shopping experience has been taken back to

the original Ballinrobe store, which now places a strong emphasis on its retail business and has adapted key elements of the successful Claremorris retail strategy to enhance both its retail and its trade offering. Today the two stores run in tandem, with a dynamic trade/retail synergy. The Ballinrobe store could be broadly characterised as primarily trade, while the Claremorris store has as its focus retail. But this doesn't tell the full story, as each store now incorporates the most successful aspects of the other to provide a comprehensive offering to Connaught shoppers with trade and retail elements that overlap under the umbrella of the Cummins Homevalue brand. The provision of services – trade and retail – is broadly the same, but the balance is different at each store.

As Richard succinctly puts it: "In Ballinrobe the business is very much trade-oriented with a retail side, and in Claremorris it's very much retail where we can accommodate a trade element and service that market."

Different customers

Richard explains that, between the Ballinrobe and Claremorris offerings, Cummins Homevalue services a very broad range of customers.

"Because of the different locations of the two stores – i.e., Ballinrobe being in a small rural town and Claremorris being a department style store in a retail park – the biggest difference between customers is that the customer in the Ballinrobe store is coming from a trade or farm background with functional requirements, whereas the Claremorris customer – 80% of whom are female – is coming into a department store environment with a certain expectation of what they might see and be tempted to buy.

"With this in mind we are now trying to create that same retail experience to the front of our Ballinrobe store. Vincent and I are mindful that the customer type is different in each store, our policy would be that all our customers must receive a high level of service to differentiate us from all our competitors."

Female shopper

The female shopper wasn't something that Cummins Homevalue Claremorris necessarily targeted at the outset, Elaine Fahy explains. It was more a case of the female customer finding them.

The customer profile at Claremorris is predominantly female. The age profile is mainly from 20 to 60 and word of mouth has been key to growing the female customer base, with



Elaine Fahy, Retail Manager
and Seasonal and Homewares Buyer.



Ronan Mannion,
Purchasing Manager, Building/Agri.

Elaine striving to deliver a shopping experience that people will go away and tell their friends about.

"A big thing for me is that a customer can come in and will be able to 'shop the shop', and I suppose not have to look for the information from a member of staff whether it's for price, description or anything else; they should be able to see at a glance price and functionality: what the product is,

how much it's going to cost and what the functions of it are. Certainly we're there on hand if they require a service but I feel female customers like to come in and browse.

"Women, we like to meander"

Elaine continues: "Functional shopping is going up and down aisles in a supermarket, but coming in here that's not what you want. You want to wander around and you want to be wowed and be blown away, and enjoy the shopping experience. And that's made easier, I think, if the product is clearly labelled, priced and looks good. And I think that's something that we've adopted now in the store in Ballinrobe."

Richard concurs that engaging product displays and clear presentation of product price and information is one of the ways in which the Claremorris experience has provided a lesson for the Ballinrobe store.

"We've brought the level of expertise from the point of view of pricing, presentation, all that goes with retailing.

"That's a big thing we took out of Claremorris to bring to Ballinrobe, that you don't require as much work to service a customer in Claremorris as you did in Ballinrobe, where a product may have been on a shelf, it wasn't priced, you went down to a trade counter and waited to get served and queued, which was creating a backlog, so we're trying to take the workload out. We're applying that to the trade element as well, that it's self-service as much as it can be."

However, specialist expertise to the trade customer remains an integral part of the Ballinrobe offering, with key staff members delegated to each division to provide information to customers, headed up by Mike Kelly and Ronan Mannion.



Merchandising is a key factor in ensuring the needs and expectations of Cummins's customers are not only met but also exceeded.

The cross-pollination of each store with the other's ideas is a key element in the success of the respective stores. While the Claremorris store can draw on the wealth of Ballinrobe's

experience and heritage in trade and hardware, ideas also flow in the other direction, with Ballinrobe learning lessons from the Claremorris expertise in retailing.

A strong association

The association with Associated Hardware (AHL) has been an important element in the success of Cummins Homevalue, Elaine says. "Our aim at Cummins Homevalue Claremorris is to ensure that the needs and expectations of our customers are not only met but also exceeded – this is achieved by the sourcing, merchandising, and aftersales service of the high-quality products you can find in store."

Everything for your home including ideas...

Elaine states: "We have constantly strived with the Homevalue team to go that extra mile in sourcing new and innovative products which we can offer in both stores at very competitive prices to our customers while retaining strong margins and allowing us to grow further in the market place. "With the strength of the Homevalue buying power ever increasing we have been able to plan ahead with a calendar of sales events, whereby we



A colourful example of merchandising at the Claremorris store.



Tableware on display at the Claremorris store.

can offer huge value to our existing customers in retail items such as fireside, pet-care, lighting, soft furnishings and one of our biggest seasonal buys will be our garden range for 2015."

AHL input into the promotional side of the business has given Cummins Homevalue a strong platform to spread the word about its product range. "The relationship we have with the Homevalue marketing team has allowed us to also target a wider range of customers with us participating in a nationwide flyer campaign during different times of the year – which is proving very effective.

"The Homevalue marketing and development team has also created an online marketing tool which has allowed us independently create our own flyers, leaflets and point-of-sale materials – which we are now using in both stores for all our newspaper ads, in-store and online/Facebook advertising."

Elaine says that social media is an area that is becoming increasingly important to Cummins Homevalue, with the avenue broadening the customer base and creating awareness primarily among younger age groups.

A promotion for every season

Providing and promoting tailored seasonal offerings is another important aspect of the Cummins Homevalue strategy, with Richard describing its approach to aggressively attack the seasonal market.

With Christmas now firmly on the company's radar, both stores were organising the Christmas displays when *The Hardware Journal* visited the two stores. One very successful initiative spearheaded by the company is a Christmas 'launch' event at Claremorris and Ballinrobe which highlights the festive offering.

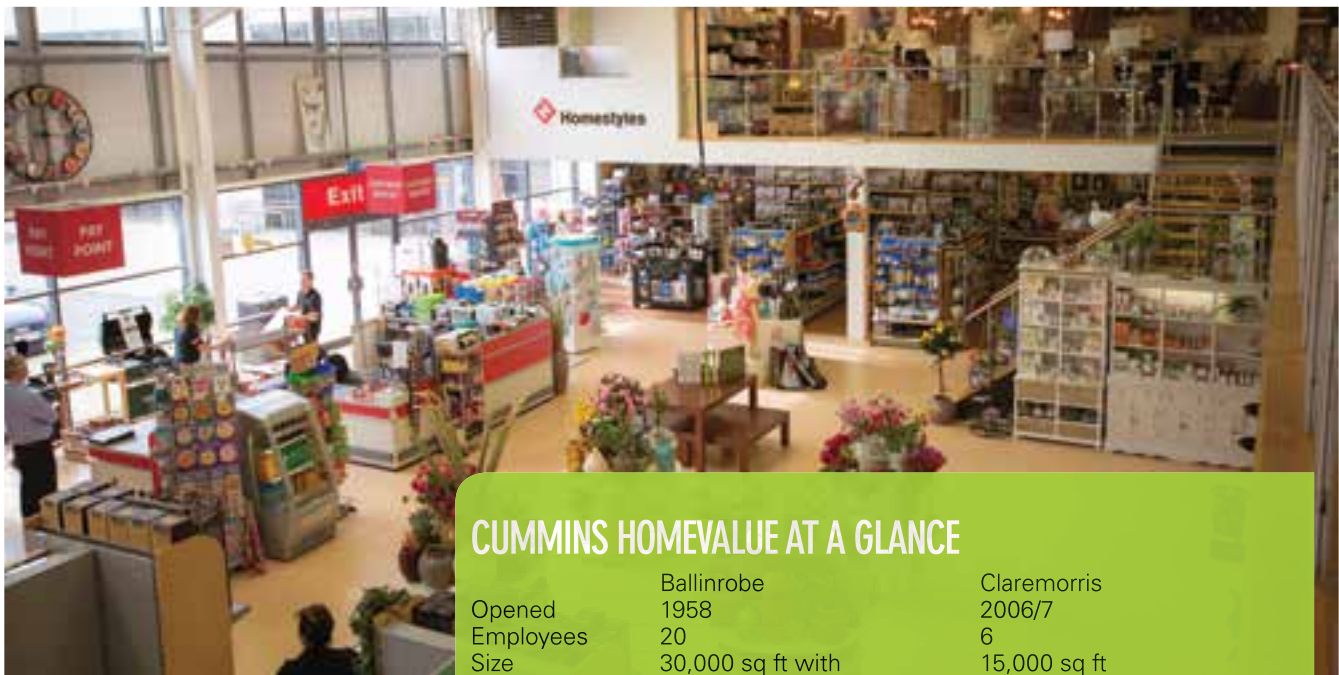
"It's a customer evening that we provide," Elaine explains. "Customers will come and we'll offer refreshments such as mulled wine, cookies and mince pies, and for the children we'll provide a Santa, elves, face painting, balloon art. We also have an artisan cake baker and decorator who comes in and demonstrates how to use some of the items on sale in our extensive bakeware department. There's also time provided for customers to browse the store, enjoy the entertainment and, if they wish, to purchase products, and avail of a Christmas discount on the night. Whether it's a practical and interesting

TURNING A VISION INTO REALITY

Niall O'Connor, Operations and Development Manager, Associated Hardware, explains how Homevalue supported the Cummins' in the transformation of their Claremorris store.

"Richard and Vincent asked Homevalue to undertake a store development project to bring their vision for their Claremorris store to a reality. The initial meeting was fantastic with loads of ideas, creativity and vision about the shop. Homevalue drew up store plans in 3D to get a good customer flow and utilise space to maximum effect. The store plans helped the Cummins brothers see all aspects from layouts to visuals of the inside and outside of the store. When the plan was agreed Homevalue managed the fit out from beginning to end. Various contractor costings were received, reviewed and awarded making sure the project was delivered within budget.

"Our Homevalue Buying Team negotiated with suppliers a strong product mix targeted at the Claremorris market. With the plan finalised and agreed by all, the Homevalue Development Team got to work, managing the entire project from planning, fit out, product merchandising, signage and point of sale. Another job completed and the store continues to go from strength to strength for Richard and Vincent."



CUMMINS HOMEVALUE AT A GLANCE

	Ballinrobe	Claremorris
Opened	1958	2006/7
Employees	20	6
Size	30,000 sq ft with 3-acre yard	15,000 sq ft
Area	30-mile radius	50-mile radius

stocking filler or something different to add to your table decoration, the festive season at Cummins has everything from Christmas tree top to the impressive lighting displays. Suppliers also get involved by way of giving us products that we pool together and create individual goodie bags for all customers.

“The Christmas customer evening is a big event and it would be looked forward to by everyone in the town, attracting large numbers to the stores. I

keep using this word, ‘expectation’ – no matter what the season is – because I hear it from the customer themselves, they can’t wait to see what we’re going to do. Expectation of our customer is huge here – which we feel is a reflection on their previous shopping experience. And that’s why we feel it’s so important to keep generating that positive customer experience.”

Conclusion

“The two stores started off very differently, really poles apart,” Richard explains.

“The Ballinrobe store started as a General Merchants shop that did everything, and as time moved on we specialised in traditionally building materials and farm supplies. I feel at the moment the shop in Ballinrobe would be 40% building trade, 40% farm supplies and 20% retail. Claremorris would be 90% retail.” Elaine agrees and adds: “Because they were General Merchants over the years, at Ballinrobe they would have had a very good, strong, loyal customer base, and I think it’s because of their expertise and the service they provide in those areas that they’ve retained those customers, whereas for us in Claremorris it’s been a learning curve trying to identify who the customer was, and then trying to specialise in the areas for the customer we had coming in the door.”

The balance between trade and retail is central to servicing the diverse Cummins Homevalue customer base.

It’s a balance the Mayo hardware company looks to be getting right.



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WORK-RELATED ROAD SAFETY SHOULD BE A PRIORITY

A recent report published by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) has made a strong case for business-owners to invest in a Work-Related Road Risk Management (WRRRM) programme. It's clear that whether you run a fleet or a single vehicle for business purposes, safety management is a priority.

According to the report, using the road for business is the leading cause of work-related deaths and injuries and is a major societal problem.

Entitled 'The Business Case for Managing Road Risk at Work', the report found that the financial and other benefits of such a programme, could outweigh the costs of its implementation.

Being involved in a fatal or serious collision can have significant reputational consequences for the company, not to mention the consequences for the person involved. The message is clear: if your employees drive as part of their job, a WRRRM is essential.

In Ireland, Work Related Road Safety (WRRS) is a priority for the Health & Safety Authority (HSA), which is working closely with a range of stakeholders representing employers and employees, educators and business sectors such as agriculture, construction and transport and logistics to improve WRRRM standards.

The HSA is also working with the Gardaí, as well as the Road Safety Authority (RSA) to influence improvements, particularly in the areas of driving for work, working on or near the road, and load securing.

To date, a range of resources have been jointly developed to help employers understand and manage work-related road risk including: Guidelines for Employers on Managing Driving for Work; a Safe Driving for Work Driver Handbook; Driver Health Guidelines; a Driving for Work Risk Assessment Checklist; Driving for Work company Case Studies; Daily Vehicle pre-check instructional videos and fact sheets.

Since 2010, the agencies have held joint seminars for employers on

a region-by-region basis and are working closely with a range of stakeholder groups representing employers, employees, educators and business sectors such as agriculture, construction and transport to influence the uptake and integration of the WRRS message.

The HSA's work in this area stretches to the EU where it is working with the ETSC under its PRAISE (Preventing Road Accidents and Injuries for the Safety of Employees) project.

The HSA also participated with the expert group that developed the ETSC's report 'The Business Case for Managing Road Risk at Work'.

WRRRM is centred on preventing harm to people, and protecting property and the environment, according to the report. It involves managing road safety in a proactive way for financial, moral and legal reasons with the aim of achieving safe drivers, journeys and vehicles.

Some key questions for businesses to ask:

- Do we operate vehicles for work?
- Do our employees drive for work purposes?
- Do employees or others drive on our premises?
- Do we provide employees with personal vehicles?
- Do we employ/contract transport services?

If the answer is YES to any of the above then appropriate WRRRM systems and controls should be implemented, and operating efficiently.

Download the full PRAISE report at <http://etsc.eu/the-business-case-for-managing-road-risk-at-work/>.

In a follow-up article in the next edition, we will be covering specific items in relation to workplace risk management.

Required by law

On average, 20 people a year are killed by being run over, crushed or otherwise injured by vehicles in Irish workplaces. Many others suffer serious injuries. In Ireland, a recent analysis of fatal accident statistics showed that reversing activities were involved in 11% of all fatal vehicle-related accidents in the workplace. Employers have a legal duty to effectively manage risks and prevent avoidable harm at work – to employees, as well as pedestrians in the workplace.

Vehicle manoeuvres and reversing continue to be the main activities most associated with vehicle deaths

in the workplace. By law pedestrians and vehicles must be able to circulate safely both in indoor and outdoor places of work. Pedestrian routes must be clearly identified and be of appropriate dimensions for the number of users and the work activities. Vehicle routes must have sufficient clearance from doors, gates and routes used by pedestrians. Where vehicles and pedestrians share routes, there must be adequate safety clearance between vehicles and the pedestrians.

For information on managing vehicles and pedestrians at work can be accessed at:

www.vehiclesatwork.ie



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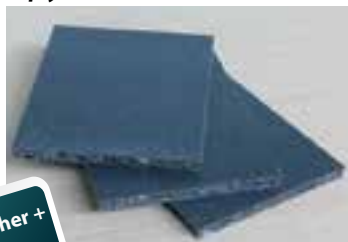
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There is nothing like that feeling of warm air hitting your cheeks when you abandon the evening's chill at the front door. But with heating costs representing a significant chunk of the household budget, homeowners are constantly seeking efficient and effective ways to warm their castles.

FUELLING UP – SUSTAINABLY

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) recommends that when buying heaters, you should make sure they are the correct size for the room, and that they have thermostatic controls. The SEAI also suggests using a space, or portable heater instead of the central heater, if just one room needs heating. This is sound advice, and when you consider that more than 70% of an open fire's heat is lost through the chimney, the argument for appropriate mobile heaters is strengthened.

One Irish company believes it holds the key to lock heat into people's homes – Flogas Ireland is exclusive stockist of the very popular Superser heaters in Ireland, and distributor of the products in the UK. According to the company, these heaters "offer customers the opportunity to spot-heat a room quickly and cost-effectively." "They are extremely useful as an instant, economic and portable way to 'spot-heat' a room quickly, as many customers find it far cheaper than turning on the central heating for an hour or two," said Eoin O'Flynn of Flogas Ireland.

There are two models featured in the Flogas autumn/winter collection: the Superser Radiant and Superser Catalytic. The Superser Catalytic burns without a flame and has lower touch temperatures, making them safer to use. This model is also fitted with easy glide castors for trouble-free moving from room to room.



The Flogas Superser heater range, available exclusively from Flogas, will create a cosy home for you and your family. Pictured is the Flogas Superser Catalytic model.



Model Karena Graham displays the lightweight and new Flogas Gaslight cylinder, available in 5kg and 10kg sizes.

Flogas Gaslight cylinders

Flogas launched a new, lightweight, gas cylinder earlier in the summer, which will eliminate any unnecessary heavy lifting and make it easier to keep track of your usage.

The Flogas Gaslight propane cylinders are available in 5kg and 10kg, and are about half the weight of the traditional

steel cylinders while the semi-translucent exterior allows customers to see exactly how much gas remains.

Flogas Gaslight cylinders are as safe as steel cylinders and won't leave rust marks on patios or decks. They fit all leading brands of LPG appliances, so are ideal for caravans, campervans, motor homes, barbeques and patio heaters.

Bottled gas

Propane direct dealers have been reporting strong annual sales growth of butane cylinders as many Flogas customers want the benefits of gas in the home for fires and cooking but are either not on the natural gas grid or don't want to go through the hassle of changing. Flogas was the first company in Ireland to introduce the Securiseal, a solid, tamper-proof cylinder seal made from a resilient polyethylene material of the highest quality.

Nationwide distribution

Flogas has an excellent distribution system, with maximum coverage. The company has three marine gas terminals, at Drogheda, Cork and Belfast, and a land terminal at Ballyhaunis.

Flogas also supplies natural gas to the commercial and residential natural gas market.

For further information on Flogas products and services, contact 041-9831041 or visit www.flogas.ie

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Cashflow can be a source of anguish for many businesses, but it is important to have a plan that will ensure the cash is flowing in the right direction when you need it most, says Keith Harford, Retail and Business Advisor.

GOING WITH THE FLOW

One of the great difficulties for businesses can be distinguishing the difference between profit and having enough cash to keep the business going. The reality is that many profitable businesses have run out of cash and ultimately closed.

So how can one run a profitable business and still watch the cash?

Most accounts packages, when kept up to date, will show the history of your cashflow.

But how can you better plan cashflow, so that your business needs are known for the next week, month, or longer, without having to employ extra resources?

Now there is a simple online planning tool that will help small- and medium-sized businesses to identify their cash needs for the short and medium term.

NO MORE PAIN?

Cashflo Plan (www.cashfloplan.com) was designed to take some of the pain away from the cashflow planning process.

Cashflo Plan works in two areas:

- planning future 'known' spend; and,
- planning future 'estimates' for certain outgoings.

Future 'known' spends can be planned for the dates they are normally paid. These include maintenance or service contracts that are often paid on a certain date each month. Cashflo Plan allows users to input these payments for recurring dates, so you input the expense once, and it will automatically repeat it each week or month as required. The final date can also be noted where, say, there may be just a set number of payments. For example, some insurance policies have just 10 payments for the year's premium.

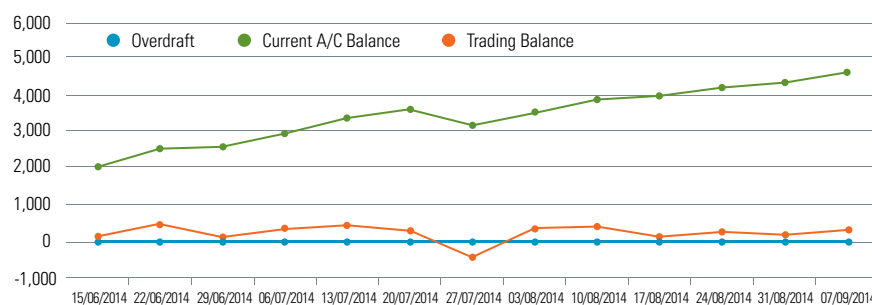
Wednesday 05/03/2014		Thursday 06/03/2014	
Hardware Supply Ltd.	€3,177.00	Wages	€2,100.00
Specialist Paint	€701.21	Paint Supplies Ltd.	€3,250.00
Wednesday Total:	€4,181.21	Thursday Total:	€5,650.00

Shows accurate in black and estimated in green

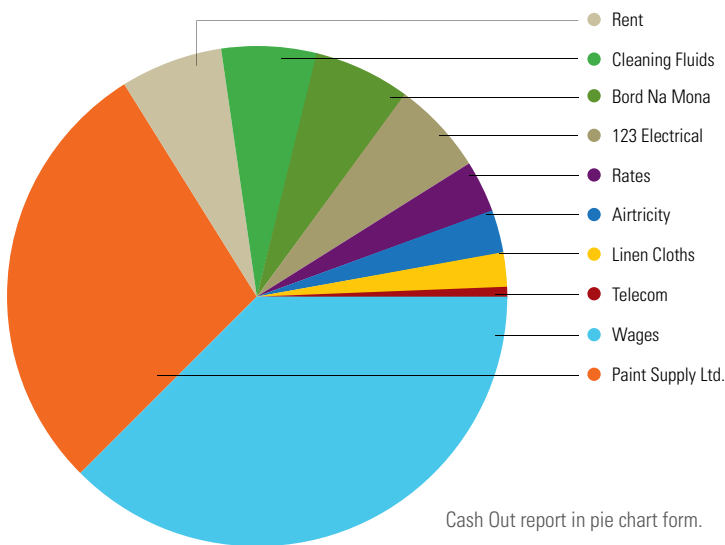
Future 'estimated' outgoings can also be entered. Many businesses know that they have certain costs, say key suppliers or wages/salaries, where there is a regular spend, roughly the same figure weekly or monthly. Let's use wages as our example. If a small business usually spends

approximately €2,400 weekly on wages, they can input this and show an 'estimate' of €2,400 each week. Then, when the accurate figure is calculated, the figure can be adjusted in Cashflo Plan for that single week, leaving the estimate in place for all future weeks.

Target	Variance with target	Cash Out	Cash In	Current A/C Balance	Trading Balance	Week Ending
26,600.00	211.52	25,971.20	26,811.52	20,716.72	840.32	15/06/2014
26,300.00	39.24	21,990.74	26,339.24	25,065.22	4,348.50	22/06/2014
26,850.00	1,764.84	25,920.48	26,614.84	25,759.58	694.36	29/06/2014
25,050.00	1,132.62	22,719.77	26,182.62	29,222.43	3,462.85	06/07/2014
24,900.00	1,848.47	22,668.47	26,748.47	33,302.43	4,080.00	Current Week
24,900.00	1,075.27	23,368.32	25,975.27	35,909.38	2,606.95	20/07/2014
25,150.00	100.00	29,684.51	25,250.00	31,474.87	-4,434.51	27/07/2014
25,000.00	250.00	21,879.98	25,250.00	34,844.89	3,370.02	03/08/2014
23,150.00	2,100.00	21,369.10	25,250.00	38,725.79	3,880.90	10/08/2014
25,350.00	-100.00	24,400.00	25,250.00	39,575.79	850.00	17/08/2014
25,350.00	-100.00	22,950.00	25,250.00	41,875.79	2,300.00	24/08/2014
24,000.00	1,250.00	23,950.00	25,250.00	43,175.79	1,300.00	31/08/2014
25,150.00	100.00	22,406.00	25,250.00	46,019.79	2,844.00	07/09/2014



Trading balance shown in figure and graph form.



Effectively, Cashflo Plan assists the decision-making process for small businesses, while also helping the business owner or manager to ensure that surprises do not occur. It is essential that businesses know their trading balance each week, i.e. the difference between incoming revenue and outgoings. Cashflo Plan shows this very clearly, in both figure and graph form.

Cashflo Plan also includes an easy to use reporting tool. You can review where your business money is being spent for a given time in the past, or where you estimate you will spend in the future.

Name	Amount	Count
Wages	125,100.00	36.00
Paint Supply Ltd.	95,275.00	37.00
Rent	21,480.00	8.00
Cleaning Fluids Ltd.	21,109.32	36.00
Bord Na Mona	20,700.00	9.00
123 Electrical	20,000.00	9.00
Rates	11,250.00	9.00
Airticity	9,200.00	8.00
Linen Cloths	7,600.00	8.00
Telecom	550.00	8.00
	333,275.07	178.00


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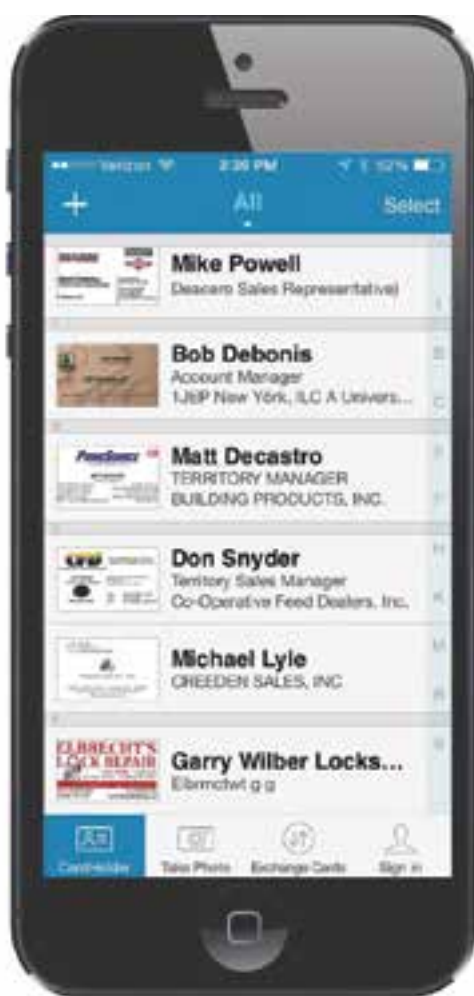
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This month's View from Abroad takes inspiration from US hardware publication, Hardware Retailing, which provides interesting and innovative news and ideas from the industry, from online shopping trends, and the best business apps, to effective ways of engaging with your customers in-store.

GET TECH SAVVY



Following a poll of home improvement retailers a list of 10 of the most popular apps for mobile devices was compiled. These apps were found to help retailers run their operations - and lives - a little more efficiently. Why not try some in your business?

CamCard allows you to photograph your business cards and it saves all the details in an easy-to-read format. Available for Android, Apple, Blackberry and Windows devices. **Tinyscan** is an easy way to turn any document on your phone or tablet into a PDF which can be easily emailed, printed or saved to other applications, such as Dropbox or Evernote. Available for Apple, Android and Windows devices.

Quick Scan allows you to create and scan QR codes, as well as search local stores and read reviews about different products. It may seem more like an app for customers, but it's helpful for retailers, too. Available for Apple devices.

Carbonite is an online backup tool that allows you to save your data in the cloud, locally to a physical piece of hardware, or both. Some plans even allow you to customise what's backed up and how often. Available for Apple, Android and Blackberry devices.

OneNote allows you to sync your device with multiple others so all your notes are organised and available on all your devices. Available for Apple, Android and Windows devices.

Retail-Next enables you to get essential in-store analytics in a variety of automatic, intuitive charts with which gives you the ability to link traffic, dwell times and other shopper behaviors to sales at the register. Available for Apple and Android devices.

Toodledo is an aptly named 'to-do' app that lets you use folders and tags to organise tasks and work on shared projects with your employees.

Available for Apple, Android and Blackberry devices.

Deputy is an employee-scheduling app that allows you to schedule, and enables your employees to post announcements or comments (such as asking if someone can switch shifts). Available for Apple and Android devices.

XPenseTracker is a quick and easy way to record your expenses and mileage, putting all the information in one app on your phone or tablet. Available for Apple devices.

HoursTracker allows you to track time and earnings for your employees and puts together reports to keep track of total earnings and paydays. Available for Apple and Android devices.

ONLINE BUYING BEHAVIOR

Buying behaviour has changed since online purchasing became an option, although it seems that consumers have been slower to purchase home improvement and building supplies online, than other items.

According to a report from the Cleveland Research Company, online sales of building supplies in 2013 amounted to only 4 per cent of overall industry sales. This doesn't seem like much when compared to 19 per cent of online sales in the consumer electronics market. However, Cleveland Research also predicts the online market share for home improvement goods could grow to as much as 19 per cent over the long term.

But research does suggest that consumers are shopping more for home improvement products online. According to a recent study from the Home Improvement Research Institute (HIRI), consumers shop for home improvement products online, across nearly every category, from hand tools and accessories to building materials.

The HIRI study goes on to show that the top five categories consumers shop for online include: lawn and garden; hand tools; kitchen and bathroom accessories; power tools; and, electrical and lighting. When it comes to Amazon's sales in home improvement products, they seem to range all over the spectrum. Though Amazon doesn't report sales figures by segment, a quick look at the home improvement and tools store on Amazon shows items ranging from water filters and flash-lights to stud finders and batteries among its list of current best-selling products. The key to Amazon's ability to really affect the home improvement category would be whether it could utilise same- or next-day delivery to meet homeowners' immediate needs. To date, Amazon still hasn't cracked this barrier. Though quicker delivery and prime membership can get products to consumers quickly and inexpensively, there still seems to be a challenge delivering on these 'immediate-need' items. Even with Amazon's success in the home improvement category yet to be decided, most analysts believe its growth in the category will be felt by the bigger hardware businesses in the industry, rather than the smaller retailers.

THE SPACE IN BETWEEN

Do you have some blank walls in your shop? Why not try adding bulletin boards to fill those spaces, while keeping your customers informed at the same time?

Putting a bulletin board near your cash register, or in the restrooms, makes customers think about their shopping lists even when they aren't actively shopping. It's the perfect place to tack up extra copies of your circulars or post fliers about your next DIY workshop or community event.



Staff members from the Columbus Zoo brought some animals to Klinker's Lumber for a visit.

KIDS GO WILD FOR ZOO VISIT

Staff in a hardware store in Waverly, Ohio, turned their shop into a mini-zoo for one day only when, in association with Columbus Zoo, they arranged for some animals to visit the store. The idea was to give children who didn't have the opportunity to visit the zoo themselves, to meet some animals.

"The kids got to see penguins, armadillos, baby leopards and more," says Jeff McCarty, vice president of operations at Klinker's Lumber. "The zoo does quite a few things in our community, and I'd been wanting to do something like this for a while." Nearly 200 people attended the event, during which time the children were able to meet a variety of animals brought to the store by specially trained staff. The store's staff used Facebook, email, local radio stations and the local newspaper to promote the event. According to Jeff, sales on the day were average, but he did notice an increase in store traffic and although some people didn't buy anything, he is hopeful that they will consider returning to the shop in future. He says the event was well-received by the community.

EVERYBODY NEEDS GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Modern Do it Best Hardware in Grand Rapids, Michigan, has devised a novel way to reach out to people in the community – through a good, old-fashioned bulletin board.

Through the Neighborhood Network bulletin board, any customers who want to promote a local business or event can pass information to the store's employees, who will post it on the board.

While the store has a Facebook page, not all its customers have, so the bulletin board works for those.

"This offers us one more way to reach out to our community," says sales associate Deb Tuitel.

She says the bulletin board currently has everything from an ad about a house for sale to contractor business cards, to a flier with information on an upcoming community event. Why not try this in your store, or find ways to incorporate it into your marketing? For example, you could add the name and number of one of those contractors to a weekly email blast, if you send one out, or post a recommendation each week from the board on your Facebook page.



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Rachel Davoren – 098-51777 (Head office)

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HARD WORKING CLOTHES FOR HARD WORKING PEOPLE

Finding the right clothes to wear to work can often be a difficult task. But when your job requires clothing or gloves that are practical and comfortable, but also offer protection, safety and durability, then you are searching for a particular calibre of workwear.

A number of Irish companies are currently meeting the needs of trades people, craftspeople, and those whose work takes them outdoors in all seasons.

These companies are synonymous with clothing items that protect from hail, rain, and snow. And whatever else your job throws at you!

It is no coincidence that Portwest is the go-to company for a lot of well-known businesses looking for premium work-wear solutions.

The company commenced trading originally as Charles Hughes Ltd in 1904 and now forms part of the Hughes Group of companies, employing in excess of 1,000 people worldwide. Its core business is selling work-wear, footwear, leisure wear and personal protective equipment (PPE) under

the Portwest brand, with distribution centres located in Ireland, the UK, Middle East, Europe and USA. Its product range includes safety footwear, rainwear, high visibility clothing, work-wear, corporate clothing and chef-wear, among others. Today, Portwest is firmly established as one of the leaders in the design and manufacture of high-quality, stylish work-wear, footwear and PPE that meet recognised international standards. The company has long term group deals with all of the large hardware/DIY groups and some of these relationships exceed 25 years.



The Portwest product range includes safety footwear, rainwear, high visibility clothing, work-wear, corporate clothing and chef-wear.

Snickers Workwear is a leading European supplier of quality workwear garments that are among the most advanced available on the market. The company has always been committed to investing in product development to ensure the high quality, functionality and durability of its garments are maintained across its entire range.

Investing in the most advanced, cutting edge technologies to revolutionise the standards in modern workwear has also been a priority for Snickers.

Snickers has a new 2014 winter garment range including the A.I.S. fleece collection, softshell range, rip-stop winter jackets, and body-warmers that will keep you warm on the coldest of days.

The new, advanced A.I.S lightweight, high-loft fleece gives the wearer a

superior level of warmth in a material that's comfortable and functional. The new range includes a full-zip jacket, a half-zip sweater and a body-warmer, and is designed to ensure maximum freedom of movement.

Snickers' 1128 rip-stop winter jacket comprises reflective features for enhanced visibility, a water resistant outer layer, fleece-lined collar and a warm, quilt lining. Another key feature is the true pre-bent sleeves to allow maximum freedom of movement in a contemporary design.

Keep warm without sweating in Snickers' advanced first layer range of tops and long johns, with revolutionary technology

that captures and releases moisture vapour for a superior microclimate next to your skin. You'll be dry five times faster than similar fabrics and will feel fresh all day with innovative, anti-odour treated, ventilated fabric.



ATG MAXIFLEX - THE BEST A HAND CAN GET

Since launching in Ireland in 2010, the ATG MaxiFlex has become Ireland's most popular work glove in a professional and DIY capacity. The ATG MaxiFlex is sold across



every sector, from builders' merchants, hardware and DIY stores, to industrial and engineering distributors and personal protective equipment specialists.

Over 200 million pairs of MaxiFlex are sold worldwide and the product is imported and distributed exclusively in Ireland and the UK by Keypoint, an Irish-owned company based in Dublin. MaxiFlex is a comfortable, breathable, skin-friendly, dexterous and durable work glove with the added value of being washable to extend life.

"We know people spend many hours wearing gloves but few consider the cleanliness when first choosing a glove. Many consumers automatically assume that new gloves are clean, this is not the case," says Keypoint National Sales Manager for the UK and Ireland, Hugh O'Reilly.

"Today, many gloves contain harmful ingredients as well as residual chemicals left on the glove following the production process.

"At ATG, consumer health and glove cleanliness are responsibilities they take very seriously. So much so, it led them to develop a sophisticated HandCare Program that is integrated into every ATG glove. Not only do they make certain that all the elements used in their manufacturing process are safe for their employees, they also wash all their gloves, using filtered rain harvested water, after the production process to guarantee them fresh and clean as certified by Oeko-Tex," adds Hugh.

All ATG gloves are dermatologically accredited and are the only gloves in the world certified by the Skin Health Alliance which gives the wearer of the gloves, the confidence that their hands are in good hands.

Snickers has a new 2014 winter garment range.

MaxiFlex[®] Ultimate[™]

The best a hand can get[™]

Dexterous

360° Breathability

Certified Skin Friendly

Extreme Durability

Ultra Lightweight



MaxiDry[®]



MaxiTherm[®]



MaxiCut[®]



Gloves for all the jobs you do



Intelligent Glove Solutions



A good computer system controls the flow of information on products and people, as they make their journey in the organisation. It gives structure, aids control, allows delegation, and frees up management to drive the business.

AT ONE WITH THE SYSTEM

There are a number of ways to help you improve business performance. For example, controlling stock losses can increase your margin by 2%, effectively doubling most hardware's profits. See Table 1 for examples of some processes that can aid business performance.

WORTH THE INVESTMENT

Miscrosoft no longer supports XP, so firms have had to upgrade their computers. Why not justify these investments by investing a little more and take substantial costs out of the business?

A firm I recently worked with has installed signature pads and now emails their invoices and statements to customers, saving €10,000 on post/stationary annually.

Good systems can substantially reduce administration overheads and inefficiencies.

A computer system is a repository of information that gets more accurate the more it is used.

For example, creating purchase orders improves the accuracy of cost prices, leading to more accurate quotations, and changes to selling prices to reflect cost price increases; and, computer-generated payment receipts improves control as the customer verifies the transaction and the information in the system.

Improved systems will also help produce more meaningful management accounts. One hardware firm has reduced its accountant's bill from €8,500 to €3,500 without doing additional work, by producing good quality monthly management accounts, as well as draft full year accounts. Good management accounts also facilitate the production of financial forecasts, which banks are insisting on at reviews.

Explore whether you are getting the most from your computers system and why?	Purpose
All products are on the system and bar coded	Accuracy
Structure for all products (department/group/subgroup)	Accountability
Staff have unique passwords and authorisation levels	Control
Customers categorised e.g. key accounts, geographically or trades	More Sales
Stock categorised by ABC outs	Less stock
Cycle counting and stock losses quantified	+2% margin
Purchase orders created on the basis of computer stock and sales	Right product
Purchase orders authorised and sent to suppliers by email	Control
GRNs i.e. goods booked in form basis of paying suppliers	Pricing
Bank reconciliations Profit & Loss, Balance sheets monthly	Reduce audit fee

Table 1.

TAKING CONTROL

Shelf edge and flap labels allocate space for products and indicate low and out of stocks, while pricing guns fail to achieve this and are inefficient. Changing prices with handhelds allows you to feel the product and judge the appropriate price point, which is missed if prices are changed in the back office. Handhelds facilitate sales reps to prepare orders for your review and authorisation, reducing out of stocks and overstocking. Where few controls are in place, power in a hardware shop lies with the person who orders or sells product, not the manager. Authorisation limits and passwords move control back to management.

Department or group structures help to allocate responsibility to staff. Accountability is achieved by reviewing sales, margin, stock turns and stock losses, for the department, or group, the staff member is responsible for. Pricing structures for different categories of customer stops endless quotations and improves consistency with customers.

Order limits ensure that a junior member of staff cannot commit the firm to an inappropriate quantity or price.

NEVER TOO OLD

As we get older we are less inclined to embrace new technology, sometimes this generational issue can be a source of conflict.

A good start to developing the next generation is to encourage them to improve the firm's systems. One older owner I worked with was afraid to 'let go' but, as the younger generation improved the systems, it became clear how well the firm was performing both operationally and financially. They have dramatically reduced their hours, and the business is controlled by having the new management present results at a monthly meeting.

Computer systems revolve around knowing your business not around technology – you don't need to be a mechanic to drive a car, but it helps if you know where you are going! When systems are working, you know as you pay an invoice, the products were needed and received, purchased and sold at the right price, and will be replenished based on future sales and present stocks.



John Hassett is Owner Manager at Topline Hassets, Birr, Co. Offaly. He is also a business coach and accountant with international experience.

Our gardening correspondent, Joseph Blair of Hortitrends digs up all the latest gardening news, including an overview of the 2014 Glee New Product Awards and a reminder of the annual Garden Futures Dinner and Conference in October

GLEE RETAILERS CHOICE AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

With a slew of new products each year at Glee New Product Awards, even the shrewdest buyer would be best advised to leave the cheque book at home!

Even I was tempted to spend - if only I had a garden retail outlet!

But if I had to choose anything to buy this year, the winning product would be it.

Nordic Garden Buildings, with its Veranda Summerhouse, was awarded the Retailers Choice award 2014, in association with the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA).

This is the second consecutive year that Nordic Garden Buildings has scooped the award, which is an exciting industry accolade for any brand.

Last year marked the first time that visitors to Glee could select the products they felt offered the most exciting opportunity. This year Nordic Garden Buildings' Veranda Summerhouse was selected from more than 300 new products that were showcased at Glee. Voting was a fiercely fought competition with several products capturing the attention of Glee's garden retail audience. The Veranda Summerhouse, however, clearly stood out from the rest.



Nordic Garden Buildings – the company's Veranda Summerhouse was the winning product at this year's Glee New Product Awards.

JOHN STANLEY TALKS GARDEN CENTRES AT GLEE

John Stanley is always at the forefront of change in the horticultural industry around the world. Considered by many to be the world's leading horticultural consultant he outlined at Glee where he thought garden retail was heading for in the year 2020. Following his travels to garden centres and other retail outlets around the world, John took a look at what independent garden centres will look like in five years.

New ideas presented include: the role of the garden centre in the community; the changing focus on category management; and, the importance of the eight-week cycle of excitement!

He says: "Keep reinventing your garden retail offering on this eight week cycle."

We say: "Don't ignore the most valuable trend you have, which is the customer who is walking through your door."



SOWEASYGROW RANGE EXPANDS TO UK MARKET



Irish company SowEasyGrow is manufacturing a number of weed prevention solutions for a wide variety of vegetables and plants that suit both the GIY-er and the commercial market grower.

The company has developed a new tool called GrowGrid for the consumer market. The GrowGrid is a weed control membrane

with holes punched at intervals to suit various vegetables, plants and cut flowers.

Normally offered in pre-packs to the public, they are now available off-the-roll at point of sale stands, aimed at the DIY market, which allows gardeners to select the exact size for their garden plot.

The company has just expanded into the UK market and has signed a deal that will see the SowEasyGrow range in over 70 stores across England.

Benefits of using GrowGrid:

- No more weeds
- Improves harvest rates
- Saves time on labour
- Reduces pests and diseases
- Improves crop success rates
- Promotes organic methods

More information is available at www.soweasygrow.ie

ATTRACTING THE NEW POTENTIAL GARDENER

Dave Denny is the Horticultural Trades Association's (HTA) Market Information Manager. He leads the association's market research among consumers and its member

businesses and has carried out in-depth research into the habits of the this key customer segment.

Dave shared the findings of the Garden Industry Marketing Board which commissioned consumer research into 30 to 45 year olds and what they want from their gardens. It uncovered some of their wants, needs and the hooks for getting them into their gardens, and also found that garden centres really need to change in order to attract their new 'potential gardener'.

To round up a very detailed presentation, the product offering has to be: quick; easy; and, self-explanatory.



GARDEN FUTURES CONFERENCE

The annual Garden Futures Dinner and Conference taking place on October 14-15 is a must-attend gathering of the key players from across the industry. This event tackles the tough challenges that retailers, growers, landscapers and suppliers encounter in the sector today. The dinner and conference moves to a new venue this year, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in Portland Place, London.

This event aims to give you the tools you need to face the future in your business including:

- Advice on building a strong and happy team.
- How market conditions will affect your business over the next 10 years.
- Tips on competing with an ever-increasing online market.
- Guidance on attracting the right customer to the right product.

More information is available at www.gardenfutures.org.uk

THERE'S ALWAYS GLEE 2015

OK, so you were too busy to visit Glee this year, but now you need to ring-fence the September 13-15, 2015 for the next Glee event. It takes military precision planning to get around and get the most out of this event for your business. HortiTrends will be putting together a visit group of Irish retailers and exhibitors for the next event.

More information is available at www.HortiTrends.ie



SOCIAL MEDIA THEN AND NOW – WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The Hortitrends stand at Glee was promoting consultant and social media services for garden retailers. We displayed a catalogue produced in 1886 by the nursery, William Bull & Son. Comparing social media today with its equivalent from over 130 years ago – the William Bull & Son catalogue – we concluded that little has changed. The catalogue's first two pages list its social network and reviews from its client base, including the 'who's who' of society at that time. Today the same principles exist – just with layers of extra technology on top. Also, we took visitors into the analytics of their social media and got them to compare the profile of their contacts on social media versus the customer profile of those who actually walk through their shop door. In many cases they found that, although they had very active online relationships with the younger 30 - 45 age group, this was not being reflected in actual sales to this and other groups. Information is power.

WESTLAND PLANTING EVEN MORE MAGIC FOR 2015

One product that caught our eye that will appeal to the 'potential gardener' segment is iGro-Sure Planting Magic. Planting Magic was the first of its kind to market and reinvigorate the plant food category. It ticks all of the boxes for being quick, easy, and self-explanatory.

New for 2015 is a 700g bag and Westland plan an increased investment of €2 million on TV advertising for the range in 2015.

The TV advert, featuring the much-loved Charlie Dimmock, shows consumers just how easy it is to use Planting Magic to deliver spectacular results! Appealing to all consumers and driving sales through a range of innovative outdoor and indoor points of sale, it's already one of the leading plant feeds.




Employers ← **CONNECTED** → **Jobseekers**

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- FreshProduceNews.ie**
Latest News for Fresh Horticulture in Ireland
- HorticultureConnected.co.uk**
All News, Events & Trends

'GardenGuide' New Seasonal Consumer Print Magazine – coming soon
'Own Brand' Cotton Available

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BUILDING MOMENTUM

Solid foundations forming for construction industry.



Green shoots are slowly peering through the foundations of the Irish economy. Recent reports from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) convey that economic growth is expected to remain strong in 2014 and 2015 with Gross National Product (GNP) of over 3.5% forecast for both years, according to the Institute's quarterly report.

Additionally, in August the ESRI research revealed that in the period from 2011 to 2021, an additional 180,000 households across the State will need somewhere to live. It is estimated that half this number will come from the oversupply of vacant

units, but the remainder, 90,000 houses or apartments, will need to be built in the same period.

The latest quarterly Construction Confidence Index, prepared by the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) in July, found that that 81% of those surveyed are currently engaged in onsite construction activity and 43% have seen an increase in activity compared to the same period last year. The number of tenders for construction activity are also on the increase, with four out of 10 construction companies saying they have submitted more tenders this year compared to 2013.

The level of confidence in the industry has also improved, with 52% saying they are more confident about the state of the industry compared to 12 months ago. While not without its challenges, this bodes well for Ireland's construction industry.

So as economic activity, and the construction industry itself grow, *The Hardware Journal* looks at some of the country's top construction-related companies, to get some insight into how business is going for them, what they attribute to this renewed industry activity, and to investigate what products are hot on the market at the moment.

Gyproc

Gyproc, a market leader in plaster, plasterboard and drylining systems, is part of Saint-Gobain, which deals in the design, production and distribution of construction materials. Manufacturing in Kingscourt, Co. Cavan since 1936, Gyproc provides sustainable and lightweight innovative design solutions to meet the demands of the construction industry.

Gyproc is always working to improve its products such as Gyproc Finish Plasters but not only that, the company has also ensured that its products stay fresher for longer, and is now offering a six-month shelf life on: Gyproc Skimcoat; Gyproc Skimcoat Short-Set; Gyproc Carlite Finish; and, Gyproc Carlite Ultra



There is now a six-month shelf-life on products including Gyproc Skimcoat.

Irish Cement

When it comes to cement products, Irish Cement has been a staple of the Irish construction industry for more than 75 years.

With production facilities located in Co. Louth and Co. Limerick, and as the leading Irish producer and supplier of cement products, Irish Cement has been fully committed to the sustainable development of its business activities. In this regard, Irish Cement has developed its Eco-Efficient cement brand, a high quality, general purpose, bagged cement suitable for all general concreting, block laying and plastering applications. The product is made from local raw materials and has grown to become the predominant cement sold in Ireland, since its introduction into the market in 2008. The product has been specifically designed to reduce the carbon intensity of cement production and to provide enhanced workability in block laying and plastering.



Eco-Efficient has grown to become the predominant cement sold in Ireland, since its introduction into the market in 2008.

Knauf Insulation

Responding to detailed feedback from trade specialists, Knauf Insulation has launched a new insulation range called Earthwool OmniFit, specifically designed as an easy-to-fit, multi-purpose insulation solution for multiple applications. Following extensive research with builders, contractors and insulation specialists, the Earthwool OmniFit range has been designed for multiple applications and provides outstanding thermal, acoustic and fire performance across three products: Earthwool OmniFit Slab; OmniFit Roll; and, OmniFit Stud.

Steve Smith, Market Development Manager at Knauf Insulation explains: "Our research revealed some startling results. Eighty nine% of installers surveyed would be keen to trial an alternative product to existing flexible slabs and rock mineral wool rolls, if it meant that handling would be easier and the products would be softer to touch. We realised that we had to fill this gap and therefore developed the new Earthwool OmniFit insulation range."

Earthwool OmniFit also delivers 'exceptional environmental performance' as it is manufactured using the innovative ECOSE Technology, according to Steve. This technology comprises a revolutionary, bio-based,



Knauf Insulation's recently launched insulation range, Earthwool OmniFit.

formaldehyde free binder that is based on rapidly renewable materials, rather than petro-based chemicals, resulting in a softer, easy-to-cut and handle insulation product.

Knauf Insulation was the world's first company to receive the coveted Eurofins Indoor Air Comfort Gold standard for its glass mineral wool products made with ECOSE Technology. The multi-purpose Earthwool OmniFit range will be available from a variety of stockists around the country.



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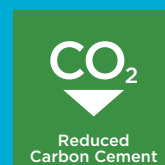


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For more details please visit our website www.irishcement.ie



Larsen Building Products

Larsen Building Products has experienced incredible growth in business levels so far in 2014, according to Peter McGill, Managing Director.

Production is up 55% on August last year, and in the year to date, there has been an overall increase of 51%.

The fact that 85% of raw materials are sourced in Ireland has had a knock-on effect for their supply base, and other local companies.

"While there has been considerable increase in activity in the construction industry throughout the island of Ireland, most of the expansion has come from Great Britain and this is a direct result of Larsen opening a sales office near Birmingham, and employing well-qualified and experienced staff," says Peter.



Larsen Ltd.'s self leveling compound

Six sales staff and two administrators have established the Larsen brand in three separate divisions: tiling; streetscape; and, highways.

In Ireland Larsen have recruited nine more production staff and three highly-experienced sales people, and now have account management, sales and merchandising staff located throughout the country in Dublin, Cork, Tullamore, Cavan, Galway, Donegal, Newry and Belfast.

In addition, Larsen has recently launched new Trade and Professional ranges of adhesives that are fully CE marked and are being well received in their tiling division and will soon launch their re-branded products within their builders' merchants division.



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- **Keep up to date with the industry, your colleagues and competitors through our website, bi-monthly magazine, monthly email newsletters and events.**
- **Regular surveys and intelligence about the industry – we are the only providers of hardware specific trends and developments.**
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TECHNOLOGY

Laydex Ltd.,

Laydex Ltd., located in Belfast, has experienced a substantial growth in business over the course of the last nine months, but especially since April, when activity levels in house building in Dublin created more demand for core building materials like radon barriers and damp proof membranes.

The sale of these products gives a clear indication of potential business for the future and Laydex believes that construction has turned the corner for now.

Sales are up month-on-month compared to last year and the RMI (repair, maintenance, improvement) sector has increased, perhaps because of the Home Renovation Incentive scheme introduced in the last budget, but mostly because of renewed confidence in the market due to increased employment, and also by buyer fatigue after seven years of holding back on expenditure, according to Laydex Ltd. Sales Director, Gerry Callan.

"I think 2014 will be seen as the year that things have begun to turn around and while there is still suspicion about sustainability, we feel from the evidence we have of the sale of our wide range of products that there is every

reason to be confident for the future," says Gerry.

Over the course of the last year Laydex has put substantial marketing support behind the Fortessa range of door handles and accessories, and are well on their way to completing their stockist potential.

The introduction of in-store display units, high quality brochures, entrance door standees, and most recently, on-screen video graphics, has created a superior retail experience for their merchant customers, according to Gerry.

Laydex Ltd have just launched Permabase Cement Board, and are currently in the process of generating technical literature which will be in the market in the next couple of weeks.



**Laydex Ltd.
have just launched
Permabase Cement Board**

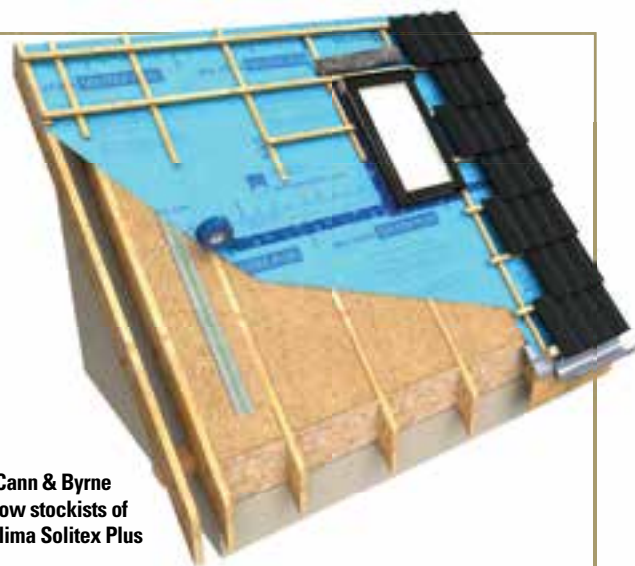
MacCann & Byrne

One of the largest producers of quality timber products in Ireland, MacCann & Byrne located in Athboy, Co. Meath, are now stockists of pro clima Solitex Plus, described as 'the next generation of high performance vapour permeable roofing underlay'.

The product is designed, engineered and manufactured under stringent conditions by pro clima in Germany. One of the main features of the product is that when under mechanical stress, (caused by accidentally stepping on the surface, or nailing the four ply combination of layers) the non-slip outer fleece, and especially the reinforced fillet material, ensure that the product is highly tear resistant so there is minimal risk of damage caused during installation. Solitex Plus also offers superior weather tightness as well as ensuring that a significant amount of water vapour is actively removed from the inside of the building, and safely diffused to the exterior. The combination of these two properties is the determining factor when it comes to quality and the safety of the roof construction.

Its vapour permeable membrane provides the following key benefits: totally resistant to all wood preservatives,

wood treatments or natural wood resins; extremely resistant to wind driven pelting rain; totally resistant to contamination due to on site chemicals; extremely nail-tear resistant; vapour resistant; and, extremely water-tight. Solitex Plus is available in a convenient roll size of 1.5m x 50m and its high performance underslating felt ensures all roofs will be finished to the highest possible specification.



**MacCann & Byrne
are now stockists of
pro clima Solitex Plus**

Tegral

Tegral recently became the first fibre cement, roofing manufacturer in Europe to be awarded the BES 6001 Certification for responsible sourcing of construction products. Tegral is also currently reviewing two exciting new product launches for 2015, aimed at the specification market.

The company believes the market is making a good recovery on the east coast, particularly in the greater Dublin area, but the pace of recovery has been slower in the west and south-west.

"We have seen an increase in renovation activity which we attribute to the Home Renovation Incentive that was successfully put forward by Hardware Association Ireland in its last budget submission," says Paddy Kelly, Managing Director.

In anticipation of a construction upturn, Tegral is expanding and investing in its human resources. In 2014, it appointed a number of new roles including Judy Fusco Linnane to the role of Marketing Manager, Niall Comerford to the



Tegral is currently reviewing two exciting new product launches for 2015

position of Customer Service Administration Manager, Alan Donohoe to the role of Regional Sales Manager (South), Fergus Hayes to the position of Roofing Sales Specialist and Cronan Kennedy to the role of Cladding (Cedral) Sales Specialist.

Wood Concepts

In the area of laminates, **Wood Concepts**, one of Ireland's largest distributors of timber products was recently appointed distributors of the Kronotex range of laminates. "The quality and range of colours available from Kronotex is now, probably the best and the largest in the market," according to Joe Flynn, MD of Wood Concepts.

"We have a comprehensive range of colours stocked for delivery nationwide with our plywood, imported timber, OSB and MDF," says Joe.

On market trends, Joe says sales are significantly up on plywood and imported timber products.



Construction activity increases over 12 months

Activity in the construction sector has increased every month for the past 12, according to the latest Ulster Bank Construction Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), published on September 8th. Growth was supported by another steep rise in new orders - buying has risen in each of the past six months, and the latest expansion was sharp. Companies are strongly optimistic that activity will continue to increase over the coming year. Rising workloads led companies to take on extra staff, with employment increasing each month throughout the past year. Although slowing from July, the rate of job creation remained marked.

Vendor lead times continued to lengthen as supplier capacity came under pressure, although the rate of deterioration eased for the second month running to the weakest since

March. On the cost front, a number of respondents indicated that suppliers had used increased demand to raise their charges. As a result, input prices rose at the fastest pace since March 2012. The PMI is a seasonally adjusted index designed to track changes in total construction activity. It registered at 61.4 in August, down slightly from the reading of 62.6 in July but still signaling a strong increase in activity at construction firms in Ireland. Growth of new work was reportedly the key factor leading activity to rise.

Housing and commercial activity

Construction firms recorded sharp increases in activity on both housing and commercial projects during August, despite the rates of expansion easing slightly. In contrast, civil engineering activity continued to fall, albeit at only a

modest pace.

New orders rise sharply

Improving conditions in the construction sector led to an increase in new work during August. New business has now risen in each of the past 14 months, with the rate of expansion remaining substantial.

Near-record sentiment recorded

Sentiment among Irish construction firms reached a near-record high in August as optimism improved for the third month running. Panelists forecast that ongoing improvements in economic conditions in Ireland and within the construction sector itself would help lead to higher activity.



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ANOTHER SIDE OF... Derek Keegan

If you had any doubt about what makes a dog a man's best friend, then a conversation with Uppercross Enterprises Limited sales rep Derek Keegan, will certainly set you straight. Derek has his dog running through hoops for him, but there is nothing that Red would rather do.

Derek and his seven-year-old border collie Red share a special bond. This bond has taken them to Italy, Spain and Belgium for the past three consecutive years, where Red represented Ireland in the World Agility Open Championships. When Red was a puppy, he partook in the usual puppy training, sociability and obedience classes at Dog Training Ireland. Here, he was introduced to some basic agility training that had him jumping through hoops. Literally. Agility training for dogs involves them learning how to negotiate various obstacles including tyres, see-saws, A-frames and weaving through poles -

even some hoops.

Agility training

Derek became very interested in this type of training and decided to research it more himself. Very soon Derek started training Red more and more, with the aim of having him compete in agility competitions. It was clear that Red, a highly intelligent and energetic dog, had a natural aptitude for the sport, and Derek assumed the role of trainer with determination and passion. The duo has worked closely together over the past five years or so, training two-to-three times per week during summer months, and slightly less during the darker winter evenings.

Derek's training style is based on positive reinforcement, with rewards playing a huge part in encouraging Red to overcome new challenges.

Red's reward

While many dogs crave food-related rewards, for Red, the ultimate reward



Red, pictured with his best friend and trainer, Derek.

is his ball every time. As soon as he does something right, Derek allows him to play with his favourite thing in the world. The effectiveness of this type of training is immense. Red understands many verbal commands that also help him to navigate a circuit, such as: left; right; weave; see-saw; jump; and, more. "It is important that he understands the names of the equipment because he moves at such speed and makes fast decisions," explains Derek. Being a border collie makes Red highly suited to agility training and competing. 90% of dogs competing in the World Championships are collies, according to Derek. "He really wants to do things and be rewarded for it," says Derek, whose enjoyment of the sport is on a par with Red's. "Ah I love it, I really do, and I see the joy that it brings Red. The bond between handler and dog is so strong. There is a huge connection there," says Derek. Derek would love to see a time when agility training is more common in Ireland, as it is in the rest of Europe. He would also like to see more training facilities to allow this. In 2015 Red will take a break from the World Championships but no doubt he will be joining Derek and his partner, Debbie, when they take a well-deserved holiday themselves.



Determined and focused, Red weaves his way through the poles at the World Agility Open Championships earlier this year in Italy.



HAIGS PRESIDENT'S PRIZE

A wonderful day was enjoyed by the great and the good who took part in HAIGS President Jim Cuddy's Prize

HAIGS President Jim Cuddy's Prize Sponsored by Tucks O'Brien, celebrating 30 years of their TALA tools brand

Hardware Association of Ireland Golfing Society (HAIGS) President Jim Cuddy's Prize took place at Carton House Golf Club, Maynooth, on Friday, August 29th, 2014.



HAIGS President Jim Cuddy presents Enda O'Donnell with the President's first prize.



Kathleen Lynch receives the President's first prize from HAIGS President Jim Cuddy.



Bob Boxwell, Tucks O'Brien (sponsors), presents David Bolger with second prize on President's day.



Bob Boxwell, Tucks O'Brien (sponsors), present Aine Parks with second prize on President's day.

Results

	Overall	Points	Handicap
1st	Enda O'Donnell	41	8 (B9)
2nd	David Bolger	41	22 (B9)
3rd	Noel Conroy	41	18

Class 1

1st	Hugh O'Donnell	38	9 (B9)
2nd	Niall Barry	38	9

Class 2

1st	Eddie Battersby	38	15
2nd	Paddy Kelly	37	16

Class 3

1st	Laurence Kelly	36	23
2nd	Alex Taylor	32	25

Ladies

1st	Kathleen Lynch	35	17
2nd	Aine Parkes	31	26
3rd	Mary Grennan	29	15

Front Nine

	Tim Lodge	21	12
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Back Nine

	Michael McBride	19	15
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Visitors

1st	PJ Lamb	41	25
2nd	B Lamb	39	16

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Make a splash
with colour

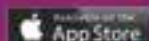
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express yourself through
colour.

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MyRoomPainter



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