

JULY/AUGUST 2015

THE HAI HARDWARE JOURNAL

THE VOICE OF THE IRISH HARDWARE INDUSTRY

HAI TO CAMPAIGN FOR EXTENSION OF THE HOME RENOVATION INCENTIVE SCHEME

SEE INSIDE FOR HAI'S 2016 BUDGET SUBMISSION



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DEAR READER,

The extension of the Home Renovation Incentive scheme is one of the key actions recommended in HAI's Budget 2016 Submission with a view to providing a stimulus for the Industry, help hard-pressed homeowners and quicken the pace of economic recovery. However, that's just one part of a comprehensive set of recommendations that HAI have proposed. For full details see our cover story on page 13. HAI continues to develop new and innovative ways to serve its members. Read about the new Members' Area that has recently been launched at www.hardwareassociation.ie on page 18. As part of the continuing expansion of member services, HAI has launched an E-Learning Platform offering New Employee Induction training which has been specifically tailored for the needs of hardware retailers and merchants. Find out about the platform on page 24.

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Enjoy the issue!
Bernard Potter, Editor

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HAI BUSINESS INDEX SHOWS CONSISTENTLY POSITIVE RESULTS

A total of 130 branches completed the fourth HAI monthly business index of net sales for April 2015. This was a 46% increase in participants from the January starting point of 89 branches.

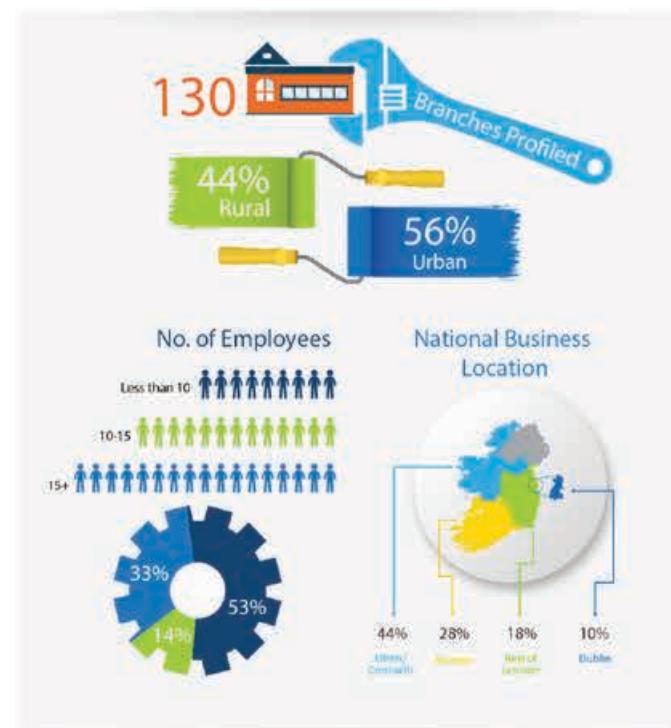
Total member revenue to the end of April 2015 shows a 14% increase on the same period last year. This rise is evident across all types of member firms and peaks in Leinster. Sector revenue in April 2015 rose 12% month on month; this is centred among urban member firms. The updated 2014 Index confirms that Quarter 3 accounted for the highest percentage of members' revenue in 2014 – particularly for branches with fewer than 10 employees. September and October were the highest grossing months last year. December, January and February were the weakest months in 2014 for revenue. April 2015 is up 18% compared to the same month last year.

The increase in data confirms trends previously published and shows a continuation of revenue increase on 2014.

To participate in HAI's monthly business index, please contact Jim on 01 2980969 or jim@hardwareassociation.ie.

SECTOR'S FIRST ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY

HAI have partnered with UCD's Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School to conduct the first all-Ireland economic impact study on the hardware industry this autumn. Members of the School's Marketing Development Programme will be talking to a cross-section of retailer and merchant members from across the four provinces with a view to supplying the collected data to Tony Foley, an economist with Dublin City University. Tony, using other sources of information such as the CSO, will prepare the economic impact study, with the report due before Christmas. This initiative continues HAI's commitment to providing valuable and relevant data for members, for the industry and for use in campaigns with Government and other agencies.





It's not just paint.
It's personal.



Johnny Giles officially opens new TJ O'Mahony branch in Glasnevin.



HOME PROJECT CENTRE OPENS NEW TJ O'MAHONY BRANCH IN GLASNEVIN

After TJ O'Mahony Ballymount picked up the Octabuild Merchant Award for Dublin City & County 2015, they were delighted to announce the expansion of their business and celebrated the official opening of the newest TJ O'Mahony Store in Glasnevin. The new 20,000ft facility is home to thousands of branded building materials products across all trade sectors. Ideally located just five minutes off Junction 5 on the M50, the branch is positioned across from Tolka Park between the Finglas and Ratoath roads. The O'Mahony name has been synonymous with the supply of quality timber and building materials to the building trade and home improvement sector for almost 60 years. "Our commitment is to offer a comprehensive range of quality products, value and, above all, a passionate staff keen to provide the very best in customer services," says Dennis O'Connor, Company Director.

FLEETWOOD HITS THE ROAD WITH PROBLEM-SOLVING PAINTS

DIY consumers in Ireland don't buy as many primers and problem-solving paints as those in other European and US markets, Fleetwood Paints reports, and the company believes a major reason for this is consumer confusion. To address the problem, they have launched Fleetwood Problem-Solving Paints. These advanced paints are designed to overcome this issue, build growth into the category and bring improvements into the overall value of the paint sector for retailers, according to Fleetwood. The Fleetwood Problem-Solving Paints Roadshow is now visiting retailers interested in stocking the company's paints. Fleetwood says the roadshow features trained advisers, who will take you through the offer in detail and help to identify display solutions to maximise your profits.

TAOISEACH VISITS CJ SHEERAN'S BALLINROBE FACILITY

CJ Sheeran had the pleasure of the Taoiseach's company at its Ballinrobe facility recently. Mr Kenny was there to cut the tape on its new kiln to heat treat and kiln dry pallets for export and also to relaunch the company's Ballinrobe facility.

The company is the largest supplier of new and recycled pallets in Ireland and has a number of other associated products and brands such as ComfyBed Equine Bedding, Second Harvest Wood Mulch and The Garden Gate (gate and fencing suppliers) operating over four sites countrywide.

The company has expanded over the last number of years and is set to see growth again this year. "We were lucky enough to be somewhat insulated against the recession as we supply mainly multinationals and domestic exporters," says Mark Sheeran, Managing Director. "Now we see the domestic economy starting to take off again which will certainly help our residue products such as bedding and mulch and also our fencing products."

CJ Sheeran employs 120 staff and has its headquarters in Mountrath, Co Laois, with manufacturing facilities in Ballinrobe, Co Mayo, and Naas Road, Dublin. It also has a corrugated box factory located in Laois.



Brendan Hogan, Recycling Manager; An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD; Mark Sheeran, Managing Director; and Fergal Moran, Sales Director.

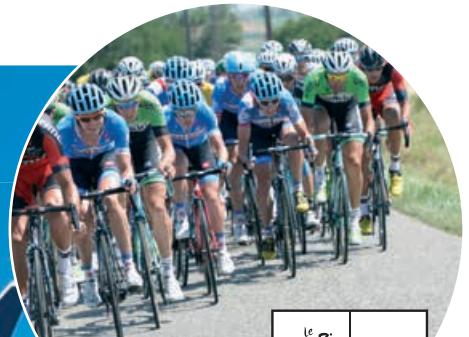
COME FLY WITH BOSTIK



The Bostik-branded Boeing 737 800.

Bostik has announced the launch of the Bostik-branded Boeing 737 800 aircraft. The Transavia aircraft will promote the Bostik Brand on flights, into and out of Dublin airport for six months. As part of Transavia Airline's scheduled daily service between Dublin and Paris, the Bostik-branded Boeing 737 will fly passengers to and from Paris, Orly, as well as other European destinations.

Bostik is one of the first companies to agree a re-branding of a Boeing 737 800 series aircraft. The project sees the aircraft re-branded with the new Bostik identity, and includes a striking image of the Bostik gecko on the tailfin.



Bostik is an official supplier to the Tour de France.



This represents 250 m² of a flying billboard.

Bostik is also an official supplier to the Tour de France 2015 – 2017. The Tour de France attracts a global audience of 10 million spectators. Cycling is one of the fastest growing sports in Ireland today and Bostik supported the event and the sport with trade activity throughout the month of July, focusing on the new Bostik Adhesive and Sealant range of products. This initiative is one of many activities designed to increase the awareness and visibility of the Bostik brand in Europe and Ireland.

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TEGRAL UNVEILS €2M THRUTONE ENDURANCE SLATE

Tegral, a market leader in roofing and Ireland's only manufacturer of fibre-cement roof slates, recently announced the launch of its €2m Thrutone Endurance product, Ireland's strongest-ever slate and Tegral's biggest new product development in over 10 years. Thrutone Endurance is the highest density slate on the Irish market, according to Tegral, offering the best resistance to Ireland's famously volatile weather. Extra fibres give the product its high flexural strength and a specialist silicone

paint provides unique water repellence. Thrutone Endurance is accredited to the highest environmental standard BES 6001 and Tegral states that it is the only Irish manufactured roofing product to achieve this rating.

Thrutone Endurance is an evolution of Tegral's ThrutonePlus slate, but with a series of major product enhancements achieved at a cost of over €2m. Following years of intensive product development and rigorous testing, Thrutone Endurance can now claim the following product benefits:

- ▶ highest density slate on Irish market which means the best frost-resistance;
- ▶ extra fibres to give the highest flexural strength;
- ▶ unique silicone paint to provide the best water-repellence;
- ▶ improved paint application and rigorous testing to ensure the highest quality standards; and,
- ▶ BES 6001 Accredited – environmentally sustainable.

As well as being 'Irish made for Irish weather', Tegral Thrutone Endurance comes with a 20-year colour and 30-year structural guarantee, giving roofers and home owners the ultimate peace of mind. Speaking at the launch of Thrutone Endurance, Paddy Kelly, Managing Director of Tegral said: "ThrutonePlus has been our best selling slate product for decades, and we've invested over €2m to enhance it with some transformational improvements to make it stronger and more durable. The end result is Thrutone Endurance and we're so excited to finally be in a position to launch this game-changing new product to the market. Feedback so far from roofing contractors and merchants is extremely positive, and pre-orders have been very encouraging. Between product improvements and delivery to market, we've invested over €2m in developing Thrutone Endurance. It represents our biggest new product development innovation in over 10 years."

"At Tegral, we pursue a relentless focus on quality, and this focus underpins everything we do. We are always striving to improve our products and we believe the launch of Thrutone Endurance cements Tegral's reputation as a market leader and we will continue to pioneer roofing innovation that delivers world-class quality."

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DS Supplies Ltd has added Wagner's castors and wheels to its product range.

CASTORS AND WHEELS AT DS SUPPLIES LTD

DS Supplies Ltd has added Wagner's castors and wheels from the Rollover collection to its product range. According to DS Supplies the products remain flexible and allow the user to realise individual ideas with individual products according to personal requirements. DS Supplies says that performance and quality are decisive for the product's safety in every field of application. Some of the key factors that should be taken into account are the floor quality, use and loading, load capacity, fastening, manoeuvrability and roll hazard. For example, if a floor is sensitive e.g. parquet, laminate, marble or tile, then a soft wheel with a soft running surface would be required. If a floor is soft e.g. carpet, needle, felt or cork, then a hard wheel or slider would be required and, if a floor is robust, e.g. PVC, linoleum or industrial flooring, then it would require a hard wheel. A spokesperson for DS Supplies states: "The newly developed equipment castor line Ultrasoft Premium scores with numerous quality criteria. The robust castors are agile and easy running with best floor protection and, due to the fast and comfortable exchange possibility of the wheel, they are easy to maintain.

"The Ultrasoft running surface made of velvety thermoplastic rubber protects even the most sensitive floorings from abrasion, stripes, scratches and dints. For the best running properties, it is equipped with a shock resistant, basically maintenance-free plain bearing and has a convex castor profile. This considerably reduces, like a racing bike wheel, the rolling friction and enables an extremely easy, comfortable and silent moving of even heavy furniture and apparatuses."

DENIS BURKE MEMORIAL CUP WINNERS

The Denis Burke Memorial Cup was held at Druids Glen Golf Club on 29th May, 2015 and kindly sponsored by Bostik.

PRIZE WINNERS

OVERALL		Pts.	H/Cap	
1st	Tim Lodge	35	(12)	
2nd	Paddy O'Leary	34	(23)	
3rd	Brian Wogan	33	(21)	
CLASS 1				
1st	Peter Morrissey	32	(11)	
2nd	Niall Barry	31	(10)	
CLASS 2				
1st	Jim Copeland	29	(15)	
2nd	Patrick Moore	28	(15)	
CLASS 3				
1st	William Dixon	32	(25)	BB9
2nd	Laurence Kelly	32	(23)	
LADIES				
1st	Kathleen Lynch	28	BB9	
2nd	Marian Kelly	28		
3rd	Joan Wallace	26		

The next HAI Golf outing is the President of the Golf Society, Frank McKeon's Prize, kindly sponsored by Tucks O'Brien, and will be held on Friday 28th August 2015 at Killeen Castle, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath. All members are welcome. Please contact William Dixon for a tee time, at 086 0708761. New members, both ladies and gents, are always welcome. Please contact William Dixon for details.

There is still limited availability on the HAI Golf society annual overseas trip in September to Sopot, Poland, 21st - 28th September. Please contact Paul Curran, Killester Travel at 01 833 6935, or 086 833 3915, for further details.



Peter Morrissey of Bostik, the event sponsor, presents Tim Lodge with the gentlemen's first prize in the Denis Burke Memorial Cup.



Barbara O'Connell, Immediate past captain and Peter Morrissey, Bostik, presents Kathleen Lynch with ladies' first prize.



NEW ASPIRANTE RANGE FROM TRITON

The Triton Aspirante range features a curved front, with a slimline, compact finish which, Triton says, makes the shower look like it floats on your tiles. There is a choice of six high gloss or matt finishes for a look that works perfectly with a variety of colour schemes or can add a touch of contrast. Triton says the luxury designer feel extends to the controls too. One central control knob selects the temperature while soft touch electronic technology incorporated into the buttons means the shower can be switched on with ease. A chrome fascia trim, riser rail and rub clean shower head complete the look. For the safety conscious, all models have an integrated phased shutdown system which makes the range ideal for use by all the family, according to Triton. The system flushes out all remaining hot water so there are no nasty surprises for the next user. This phased shut down has the added benefit of prolonging the life of the shower and limiting the need for future maintenance. The Triton Aspirante shower range is priced from €300 to €350, depending on finish and kW size.

ABRACS INVESTS IN IRISH MARKET

Abrasive consumables supplier, Abracs, has announced the appointment of Martin Brennan to the position of business development and key accounts manager in the Irish region. He will be responsible for growing Abracs' share of the Irish market, spearheading a new drive to raise awareness of the 25-year-old company's product portfolio and unrivalled customer service record. Abracs, headquartered in Yorkshire, supplies abrasives and accessories to wholesale distribution channels throughout the world. A proactive approach to developing products for



FINANCE FOR NON-FINANCIAL MANAGERS COURSE

'Finance for Non-Financial Managers' Course for Hardware Retailers and Merchants will take place at Citywest Hotel, Dublin on the 8th and 10th of September 2015. The course will be facilitated by John Hassett, Owner Manager at Hassetts, Birr, Co. Offaly and a business coach and accountant with international experience.

Objective:

This course is designed for owners and managers of hardware stores, who want to gain improved insight into the finances of their business.

Benefits:

The course will enable managers to understand and manage the impact of their decisions on business results and enable them to interact confidently with their accountant and banks.

Learnings:

- ▶ Financial terminology
- ▶ How day-to-day decisions impact cash and profits
- ▶ Analyse your firms financial performance
- ▶ Initiate actions to improve your firms financial performance

€150 for members €200 for non-members

To make a booking enquiry please contact

amanda@hardwareassociation.ie.

Places are limited so please book early to avoid disappointment.

DULUX LAUNCHES MODA LUXURY PAINT COLOURS

Moda, by Dulux, is a luxury paint collection featuring 25 colours which work independently, or together, as part of five bespoke palettes which can help homeowners achieve a design look for their homes, according to Dulux. The five palettes are very different, Dulux notes. Subtle Glamour takes inspiration from old Hollywood glamour. The Him & Her palette is described Dulux as "the perfect colour marriage of the masculine and the feminine persona". Coastal Calm combines warm coastal colours, while Mineral Glow is inspired by nature's mineral hues like anthracite, copper and gold. True Romance offers a romantic palette of powerful pinks, neutrals and greens. Moda uses only the best clays and pigments to deliver what can be described as one of the best quality paints on the market, Dulux claims.

many different industries and markets, combined with a commitment to market leading distributor support services, a next day delivery service enabled by its huge UK stock holding, and a loyal customer base are key elements that have consistently helped to drive the company's growth.

Mr Brennan has a wealth of experience in the Irish abrasives market having previously worked for some of the top manufacturers and distributors, including Marchrist, Saint-Gobain and most recently Tyrolit. His appointment signals the start of a significant investment programme in the Irish market to propel Abracs to become the supplier of choice for abrasive consumables and associated products in the region.

HAI IS DELIGHTED TO WELCOME OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

AMIG

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Business: Electrical Accessories/Handtools

YOUR CREDIT COACH

Following on from the focus on credit in our last issue, we are delighted to announce that Declan Flood, aka The Credit Coach, has come on board to assist members with any credit-related issues they are experiencing. Over the next six issues, we will be focusing on each of the key areas of credit from Assessment (which helps you to make the decision on who you are going to give credit to, how much you are prepared to extend and how long you are prepared to wait for payment) to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that detail the areas requiring attention and monitoring on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. We are revising and updating the Credit Management Handbook that so many found to be really useful.

Soft copies of the original publication are still available on request from the office. Email jim@hardwareassociation.ie to receive your copy, if you haven't done so already.

There will be online tutorials on the area of credit, some for a general audience, and others for members only.

Later in the year, we will arrange some live workshop-based credit control training events, so you will leave with a clear action plan and checklists, together with access to calculators and other tools to take the hard work out of it for you.

If you have any pressing issues, you can always contact Declan directly on 087 244 7052 or email Declan@thecreditcoach.ie. He is happy to help in any way.

Remember, effective credit control turns sales into the cash that keeps your business going. Growing sales is great but it is better when you also get paid in full and on time, and over the coming months we will show you how to get your money and keep your customer.

WE NEED YOU... AND WE WANT YOU TO NEED US TOO!

HAI provides the following benefits to member companies:

- ✓ Lobbying and representative services to Government – we campaign on your behalf so you can get on with running your business.
- ✓ Educational opportunities – dedicated courses, tutorials and online learning to upskill and develop you and your colleagues
- ✓ Keep up to date with the industry through our website, bi-monthly magazine **The Hardware Journal**, monthly email newsletters, LinkedIn page, Twitter feed and events.
- ✓ Regular surveys and intelligence about the industry – we are the only providers of hardware specific trends and developments including our monthly business index, wage survey and business confidence monitor.
- ✓ Business support services – HR advice, compliance information, member discounts and affinity schemes.



To find out more about how we can help you, visit hardwareassociation.ie or call Jim on 01 298 0969 or at jim@hardwareassociation.ie



The extension of the Home Renovation Incentive scheme is one of the key actions targeted in HAI's Budget 2016 Submission to provide a vital stimulus for the Industry, help homeowners and boost economic recovery. Here we outline HAI's full list of recommendations.

HAI BUDGET 2016 SUBMISSION URGES GOVERNMENT TO EXTEND HRI SCHEME

HAI speaks with one consolidated voice and fulfils a unique and vital role in connecting merchants with their suppliers in a non-commercial environment. HAI members play a key role in the construction supply chain, providing an efficient and effective route to market for building material products and a vital source of credit to customers.

Our members operate in one of Ireland's key economic sectors. Construction is a major barometer of, and contributor to, the nation's economic success and has been dealt a devastating blow in the past number of years. The housing market remains heavily under-supplied and new house build activity remains subdued. We urge Government to stimulate the sector and implement all actions outlined in the Construction 2020 strategy.

Most relevant indicators continue to suggest that the market remains most challenging for firms in rural Ireland and any uptake in business activity is focused primarily in the Dublin/Leinster region. HAI supports the CEDRA report and welcomed the announcement of a dedicated Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Rural Affairs last summer. We acknowledge that reducing the ever-increasing divide between the urban and rural economy is challenging

but encourage Government to fast track key business infrastructure components before that gap widens beyond recovery.

HAI specifically calls on the Government to consider the following actions:

- 1. Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) scheme extension;**
- 2. Introduce voucher scheme for winter fuel allowance;**
- 3. Combat fuel smuggling;**
- 4. Commercial rates reduction/relief for yards/temporary structures;**
- 5. Promote prompt payment;**
- 6. Bring the Construction Contracts Bill into law;**
- 7. Give VAT back in rural areas for one off houses of <1200 sq. ft.; and**
- 8. Allow corporation tax allowance on profits <€50,000**

Home Renovation Incentive scheme extension

Of the eight recommendations we are proposing to Government to include in the 2016 Budget, the extension of the HRI scheme beyond its planned end date of 31st December 2015 is probably the most important to continue the tentative recovery in our sector and to bridge the gap



HAI recommends extending the HRI scheme by 24 months.

between uptake of the scheme in Dublin and surrounding counties, and the rest of the country.

It is difficult to track the direct impact of the scheme on our hardware and builders merchants. However, data from HAI's monthly business index indicates that total member revenue to April 2015 shows a 14% increase on the same period last year. A year-to-date rise is evident across all types of members and peaks in Leinster. This correlates with the information on HRI provided by Revenue and supports the link between the scheme and any uptake in business activity. Our campaign to save the HRI scheme must be for the benefit of all members and, indeed, the customer who may not yet have taken the decision to improve their home and doesn't realise this scheme will end in just over five months' time. HAI also suggests lowering the floor of the qualifying spend to €3,000 (-33%) to encourage small home dwellers to invest in their properties, and also to increase the ceiling to €36,000 (+20%) as an incentive for homeowners to pursue additional home improvement projects. Evidence to date suggests that the HRI scheme is indeed acting as a strong encouragement for otherwise latent home improvement works, thereby making the scheme effectively cost-neutral for the Exchequer.

HAI also requests that the tax credit be made claimable in the same year as work is completed, with 100% of the claim credited the following tax year (currently spread over the following two fiscal years). This would provide an extra incentive and ensure money is more efficiently circulated back into the economy.

HAI Recommendations:

- ▶ Extend the HRI scheme by 24 months.
- ▶ Lower the floor of the scheme and increase the ceiling.
- ▶ Claim tax credit in same year as work completed and claim credited following year.

Over 29,000 works have been registered with the scheme across more than 21,000 individual properties nationwide since it began in October 2013. Table 1 shows the value of those works. Tables 2 and 3 show a breakdown of the types

of work most commonly completed under the HRI scheme. Table 4 provides a breakdown by county of the number of individual properties registered with the HRI scheme, the total number of works and their estimated value:

Voucher scheme for winter fuel

HAI urges the introduction of a fuel voucher system that would entitle those currently receiving a winter fuel allowance to use a dedicated fuel voucher/smart card to purchase only fuel products from registered and tax compliant retailers and merchant fuel outlets, including many HAI members. Currently, the allowance is paid by way of a cash top up on the recipients' current payment, which can be spent on anything, not exclusively solid fuel, and from any source of supply without any traceability or recovery for the State. HAI believes that this is an unintended and unnecessary loophole. The Department of Social Protection has indicated that a total of 410,000 people currently claim €20 in fuel allowance per week (€520 in total during the allowable period), including those in receipt of social welfare and HSE payments. The allowance costs the State €213 million per year. A fuel voucher system would allow the Government to recoup some of this €213 million expenditure through legitimate outlets' tax returns, 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, as intended, to help in reducing fuel poverty.

HAI Recommendations:

The introduction of a fuel voucher scheme so that:

- ▶ The winter fuel allowance is used as intended.
- ▶ Registered and tax-compliant fuel merchants are supported.
- ▶ Government can recoup some of its €200 million plus welfare spend.

Combat fuel smuggling

HAI particularly calls on Government to tighten activity in the shadow economy. The current tax treatment (carbon tax) of solid fuel continues to present a strong incentive

HRI scheme statistics to mid-July 2015.

Source: Revenue

Number of works	31,487
Number of Properties	23,070
Total Estimated Value of Works	€486,862,521
Average Value of Works	€15,462
Total Number of Contractors	5,495

Table 1.

Top 5 Works by Value	% of Total Works by Value
Home Extension	34.45%
General Repairs and Renovation	23.83%
Window Replacement	12.09%
Kitchen Renovation	9.7%
Bathroom/Shower/En Suite Improvements	3.33%

Table 2.

Top 5 Works by Number	% of Total Works by Number
Window Replacement	24.12%
Kitchen Renovations	18.32%
General Repairs and Renovation	12.47%
Home Extension	9.65%
Other Works (unspecified)	6.29%

Table 3. Top 5 categories of work by reference to the value of work completed.

County	Number of Properties	Number of Works	Value of Works €M
Carlow	171	230	2.22
Cavan	135	165	1.93
Clare	367	473	5.79
Cork	2,589	3,593	52.59
Donegal	150	194	2.80
Dublin	11,016	15,180	270.19
Galway	938	1,280	18.60
Kerry	414	561	6.90
Kildare	1,230	1,636	20.44
Kilkenny	323	421	5.68
Laois	128	174	2.09
Leitrim	90	106	1.47
Limerick	699	981	11.88
Longford	77	111	1.22
Louth	355	437	5.58
Mayo	296	391	5.17
Meath	764	1,046	13.51
Monaghan	83	115	1.42
Offaly	182	241	2.78
Roscommon	196	278	2.78
Sligo	235	327	5.45
Tipperary	546	714	9.27
Waterford	428	575	7.41
Westmeath	311	426	5.20
Wexford	434	580	7.33
Wicklow	913	1,252	17.18
Total	23,070	31,487	486.86*

* Figure may be affected by rounding.

Table 4.

to smugglers, resulting in illegal trading activity seriously undermining the legitimate trading of many hardware businesses in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). The solid fuel market is estimated in volume terms, by the SEAL, to be 410,000 tonnes for coal products; 203,000 tonnes for peat briquettes and 700,000 tonnes for sod peat.

When carbon tax was introduced in the Finance Act 2010, its application to solid fuel was deferred until 'a robust mechanism' could be put in place to protect the market in the ROI from illegal imports.

However, while the carbon tax has been fully implemented since 1st May, 2014, there is little or no evidence of an appropriate protection mechanism, as promised. HAI supports the registration of all solid fuel traders, suggests that Revenue carries out a public awareness campaign to clarify the regulations with regard to personal imports, and needs to be - and be seen to be - auditing fuel suppliers in order to increase compliance.

HAI Recommendations:

- ▶ Implement a solid fuels register.
- ▶ Instruct Revenue to raise awareness of personal import rules.
- ▶ Instruct Revenue to audit fuel suppliers.

Commercial rates reduction/relief for yards/temporary structures

Builders merchants operate in a unique environment; they require more space than regular retailers, in addition to their shop space. Merchants use yard space, for example, to load trucks, turn trucks and store stocks. Temporary structures are also erected to store and protect stock but, with the inevitable reduction in stock volume since the sharp decline in construction activity, this usage has fallen, whilst commercial rates have remained a fixed cost. Yards are included in the rateable valuation, so HAI advocates a reduction or relief in commercial rates in respect of these yards and temporary structures.

HAI Recommendations:

- ▶ Reduce commercial rates or provide rate relief for yards.

Promote prompt payment

Whilst the Prompt Payments Code introduced in April 2015 is a welcome initiative, it is not mandatory and there has been no sign of a positive campaign to encourage businesses to get behind it. When a similar code was introduced by the UK Government in 2013, it declared it was 'going to war' on the issue of late payments. It is this kind of assertive action that HAI believes is needed here. In the space of two months and under the threat of being 'named and shamed', there had been a noticeable shift in UK businesses' response to the issue, largely due to politicians

keeping it front of mind. Independent analysis from Experian suggested that signatories to the UK equivalent of our Prompt Payments Code represented over 60% of the total UK supply chain value. Without an appropriate campaign here with real voice, energy and commitment, our industry will continue to struggle with and be financially impacted by this issue. HAI also suggests and supports increasing the upper limit pursued under the small claims procedure in the District court to €5,000 (currently €2,000). This would be a simple and effective measure to allow smaller businesses to deal with significant bad debts.

HAI Recommendations:

- ▶ Initiate a pro-business campaign that 'names and shames'.
- ▶ Increase the upper limit pursued under small claims procedure to €5,000.

Bring the Construction Contracts Bill into law

As a key part of the Construction 2020 strategy, this Bill needs to be delivered without further delay. The problem of non-payment of fees to contractors not only jeopardises the future of contractors, but also the jobs they provide and the many indirect impacts further down the supply chain. Cash flow for HAI members is vital to the survival of their businesses and, during recent years, many sub-contractors went under simply because larger construction companies/developers did not pay them for their work.

This had a direct effect on hardware and builders merchants who offered credit terms to these same contractors and who continue to face cash flow problems without this protection being in place. According to the Department for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Act should have commenced in Spring 2015 but we continue to wait.

HAI Recommendations:

- ▶ Ensure the Construction Contracts Bill is brought into law without further delay.

VAT back in rural areas for one-off houses of <1200 sq. ft.

In order to promote and encourage excellence in build, HAI urges Government to offer the VAT back on one-off houses less than 1,200 sq. ft. in rural areas. This may only be applicable for first time buyers and properties may not be sold for a period of up to five years which complies with the current Revenue rule of 'new supply'.

HAI Recommendations:

- ▶ Incentivise rural construction by offering the VAT back on one-off houses.



The Construction Contracts Bill must be brought into law without further delay.

Corporation tax allowance on profits <€50,000

HAI suggests an additional corporation tax allowance/deduction for building materials stocks up to a qualifying limit of €50,000 in rural areas. There is no tax relief for stock that merchants have invested in and this is particularly onerous on businesses in rural areas. This incentive could also run concurrent with our request for an extension to the Home Renovation Incentive (HRI) scheme where businesses can be identified as operating in a rural context.

HAI Recommendations:

- ▶ Provide relief for rural merchants by providing a corporation tax allowance.

HAI members, both hardware and builders merchants and suppliers, continue to face huge challenges and difficulties. Although HAI members have received encouragement through the positive impact, to date of the HRI scheme, we are calling on Government to enforce more effective and controlled measures to stimulate the construction sector, especially in rural areas, and reduce activity in the shadow economy. **HAI calls on all members to support us in our Budget 2016 Submission, please contact Annemarie on 01 2980969 or annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie for further information**



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HAI LAUNCH MEMBERS' AREA ON WEBSITE

HAI recently launched a new Members' Area on www.hardwareassociation.ie.

This area is exclusive to HAI members and offers a variety of useful information and tools including business support, online learning and market intelligence reports. A range of member-only offers and discounts are available from providers of telecoms services to healthcare and merchant services. These services will continue to grow over the next few months as we understand more about our member's needs and requirements. All HAI members will have recently received a link to a registration page; here you can choose your own username and password (see Figure 1).

You will then receive an email confirming your registration and details. You can now login to the Members' Area of the website. At the top right hand corner of the updated website you will find the login box (see Figure 2). Enter your username and password and a new menu will appear underneath the public site menu. Here you will find a range of additional services available exclusively to members (see Figure 3).

Business Support section

In this section, we offer the following member exclusive services:

- ▶ HR Resources, including a suite of templates (see Figure 4)
- ▶ Compliance and Regulation Updates (see Figure 5)
- ▶ Member Only Discounts:
HAI has selected a number of providers who are offering members a discount or preferential rate on useful services for your business. HAI has done the ground work so you can get on with running your business. If you would like to suggest any services that we could provide please contact us at info@hardwareassociation.ie or on 012980969.

Figure 1.

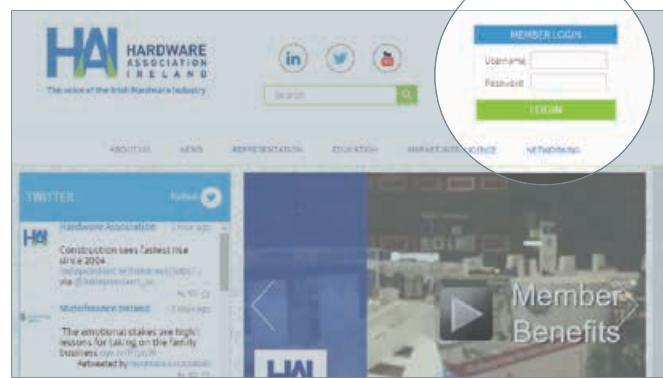


Figure 2.



Figure 3.

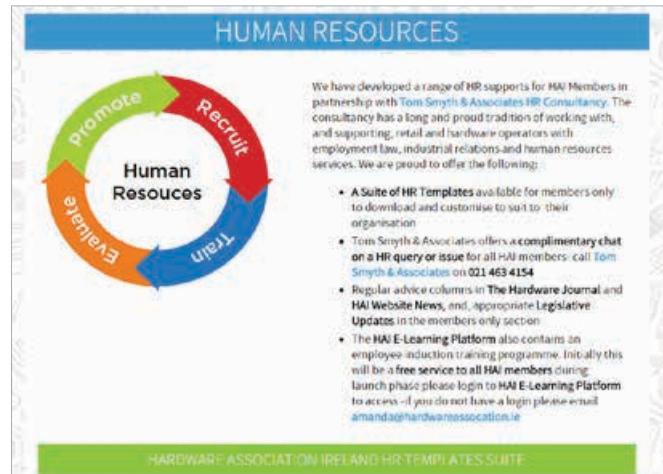


Figure 4.

COMPLIANCE & REGULATION

HAI works with various partners and has alliances with Government bodies and specialist organisations in order to keep members up to date with industry regulation and legislative requirements.

HAI supports member organisations with updates and representation on the following:



**HUSSEY
FRASER**
SOLICITORS

Legislative



**HEALTH AND SAFETY
AUTHORITY**

Health and Safety



NSAI



Department of Agriculture

Figure 5.

INDUSTRY CONFIDENCE

In July 2013 and July 2014 HAI surveyed its members to understand more about their business activity including their business performance, staff remuneration, key business issues and how confident they felt towards the next 12 months.

We will continue to survey members in July 2015 about their confidence in the sector given the tentative signs of recovery and early signs of growth year on year identified in the business index.



Member Confidence Monitor
2013



Member Confidence Monitor
2014



Member Confidence Monitor
2015 - To be published in
July 2015

Figure 6.

4 ply tear resistant Intelligent windtight, diffusion open membrane



Intelligent Airtight
and Windtight
building systems

For more information:
T. 046 9432104
info@maccannandbyrne.ie
www.maccannandbyrne.com

**MACCANN
& BYRNE**



SOLITEX PLUS

The diagram illustrates a cross-section of a roof structure. The top layer is a blue SOLITEX PLUS membrane. Below it is a layer of grey insulation. The structure is supported by a wooden joist system. A white pipe passes through the membrane. The SOLITEX logo is visible on the membrane. Logos for BBA (British Board of Agrement), NSAI (National Standards Authority of Ireland), and CE are present in the bottom right corner.

INNOVATIVE FUTURETHERM WINDOW FEATURES INTEGRAL BLIND

Recently winning the top award of 'Best Overall Innovation' at the 2015 Hardware Association Ireland Innovation Awards, Keylite Roof Windows continue to combine installer-friendly features with patented installation and energy efficient



Keylite's Integral window incorporates a blind inside the double glazed unit, making it 100% protected against condensation, damage or staining.

performance innovations.

The true measure of effective innovation is a process which addresses known issues to produce more efficient products which are easier, better, or most cost effective

to use. According to Keylite, its new Futuretherm window with integral blind does all of these things in one unique package.

Roof windows in the home tend to inevitably be fitted with blinds to facilitate solar control and enhance privacy, but in some areas such as bathrooms and kitchens, the moist steamy atmosphere leads to issues such as mould and excessive wear and tear on conventional roof window blinds. Keylite's Integral window however solves this problem by incorporating a blind inside the double glazed unit, making it 100% protected against condensation, damage or staining. Another key addition provided by the Futuretherm window is the ground breaking Expanding Thermal Collar feature which is designed to effectively self-insulate the industry norm 20mm gap between the window frame and the roof. This now ensures that every Keylite Roof Window installation offers complete insulation in the area between the window frame and the roof every time.

Keylite offers a full range of roof window products, designed for every project scenario and every roof type as well as loft ladders, roof window accessories and an extensive range of genuine Keylite Blinds, with colours to suit every room interior.



Innovations for a warmer home

- ✓ Expanding thermal collar for a warmer roof.
- ✓ Streamlined fit for a more attractive roof.
- ✓ Innovative options for more convenience in the home.



INNOVATION
AWARDS 2015
OVERALL WINNER

THE HARDWARE
SHOW 2015
SOUTHERN IRELAND

keyliteroofwindows.com

5% DISCOUNT FOR NEW HAI MEMBERS
JOINING BEFORE 30th SEPTEMBER



Some
businesses
are blind to
the law on
packaging
recycling.

Any business with a turnover of €1 million that places 10 tonnes or more of packaging on the market must comply with the Packaging Regulations - or face prosecution. Compliance is as easy as joining Repak, which is the most cost effective option chosen by over 2,000 Irish companies.

Hardware Association Ireland have negotiated the following competitive Repak membership rates for the hardware and building materials' sector. The sector's obligation only begins at a turnover of €1.465m - €3.649m your annual fee will be €400 + VAT. With a turnover of €3.65m or greater, your annual fee will be €980 + VAT

Find out more about Repak and your company's obligations on repak.ie or call us on (01) 467 0190

REPAK
Business funding recycling

www.repak.ie

HAI
HARDWARE
ASSOCIATION
IRELAND

* Failure to comply with the Packaging Regulations can lead to a fine of up to €500,000 on indictment or imprisonment for a term of up to 3 years.



HAI SURVEY IDENTIFIES WAGE RATE TRENDS

As we continue to see recovery in the industry, it is critical that you have sufficient information to make important business decisions. HAI recently asked members to complete a survey on current wage rates and future employment plans.

Considering that 58% of Retailers and Merchants, and 85% of Suppliers, intend to hire this year, this information will act as an industry benchmark and can be used as a tool when setting wages and assessing whether your business lies within industry averages. Two separate surveys were carried out, one specific to Retailers and Merchants and one specific to Suppliers.

Retailers and Merchants

In total, 47 members completed the survey. Of the respondents, Rest of Leinster and Munster members account for the largest percentage of participants with 34% and 32% respectively. Of the respondents, 45% spend 15% of turnover on wages; 58% intend on hiring this year and 35% intend to increase wages by an average of 2%. Dublin is above the national average of pay on all positions surveyed, with all other regions staying close to average for all positions (see Table 1). General Manager and Department

	Small	Medium	Large		
General Manager	38 - 42 K	46- 48 K	50 - 54 K		
Department Manager	31 - 32.5 K	37 - 39.5 K	38.5 - 41.5 K		
	Nationally	Dublin	Rest of Leinster	Munster	Connacht/Ulster
Senior Sales Assistant	27 - 30 K	29 - 32 K	27 - 30 K	26 - 29 K	27.5 - 30.5 K
Junior Sales Assistant	19- 22 K	21.5 - 24.5 K	19 - 21 K	19 - 21 K	18 - 21 K
Accounts & Credit Control	27 - 30 K	29 - 31 K	27 - 30 K	27.5 - 29.5 K	26.5 - 28.5 K
Administrative	24 - 27 K	27 - 29 K	23 - 25.5 K	24 - 26.5 K	23.5 - 25.5 K
Yard Staff	24 - 27 K	26.5 - 29.5 K	24 - 27 K	22 - 25 K	25 - 28 K
Driver	25 - 28 K	27 - 29.5 K	24.5 - 27.5 K	25 - 28 K	26 - 29 K

Table 1. Retailers and Merchants wage rate survey findings.

GOOGLE BAROMETER TRACKS DIY SHOPPER BEHAVIOUR

Google recently launched its Consumer Barometer 2014/2015 – which now includes market specific information for DIY product purchasing behaviours. The addition of filters for specific sectors and locations into the tool provides hardware businesses and marketers with valuable insights as to how consumers behave when making purchasing decisions. 84% of Irish people use the internet daily for personal activities; here lies a massive opportunity for engagement by brands with Irish consumers. Of those whose most recent purchase was a DIY product, 50% first learned of the product they purchased either online or on an app and nearly a quarter of these completed their purchase online.

The tool is free to use and customised graphs can be created based around location and sector. See more at www.consumerbarometer.com

Manager were assessed by number of employees as this provided clearer results compared to regional findings. Non-managerial positions are listed with national and regional averages. Figures reflect the upper and lower averages of wage in € per annum. The last time HAI completed a survey on wage rates for Retailers & Merchants was 2012. This is available in the Members' Area of our website.

Suppliers

In total, 27 members completed the survey. Of the respondents, Dublin accounts for the largest percentage of participants at 65%. Of respondents, 38% spend 15% of turnover on wages, 85% intend on hiring this year and 62% intend to increase wages by an average of 2%. There is a clear correlation between size of business (number of employees) with rate of pay increases (see Table 2). All positions were assessed by number of employees as this provided clearer results compared to regional findings due to a high percentage of the sample being based in Dublin. Figures in Table 2 reflect the upper and lower averages of wage in € per annum.

	Small	Medium	Large
Senior Management	63 - 65 K	74 - 76 K	78 - 79 K
Middle Management	31.5 - 33 K	45 - 46.5 K	47 - 48 K
Buyer	37 - 40 K	40 - 43 K	43 - 44.5 K
Senior Field Sales Representative	40.5 - 42.5 K	46.5 - 48 K	45.5 - 47.5 K
Entry-level Field Sales Representative	32 - 34.5 K	29 - 32 K	32 - 35 K
Administrative	21 - 24 K	26 - 29 K	29.5 - 32 K
General Operatives	20 - 23 K	25 - 28 K	28 - 30 K
Driver	N/A	27 - 29.5 K	28.5 - 31 K

Table 2: Suppliers wage rate survey findings.



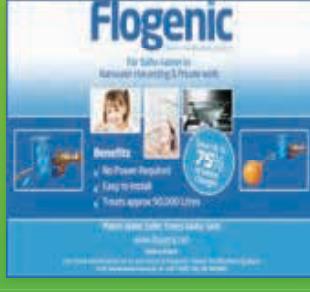
THE HAI HARDWARE JOURNAL

THE VOICE OF THE IRISH HARDWARE INDUSTRY

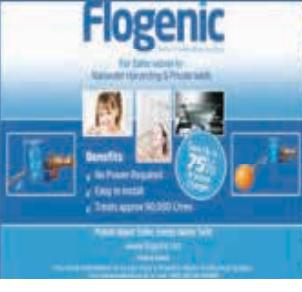
ENHANCED ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

THE HARDWARE JOURNAL WILL INCLUDE FROM THE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER ISSUE A SUPPLIERS AND SERVICES DIRECTORY

Offering exceptional value in two new advertising sizes:



50mm (h) x 55mm (w)
€1,050 for six editions



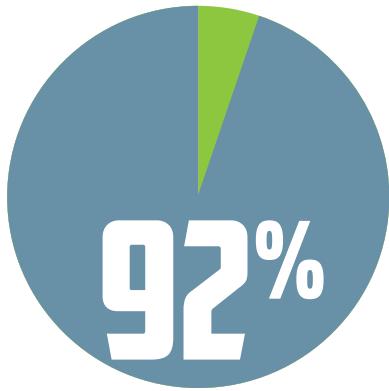
100mm (h) x 55mm (w)
€1,650 for six editions

Advertisements (text plus logo) can be emailed to: hardware@ifpmmedia.com

at least two weeks prior to publication (September 9th).

All advertisements must be prepaid prior to publication.

JULY/AUGUST 2015 23



of members who completed our Training Needs assessment survey in March 2015 would consider E-Learning beneficial to their business.

HAI has launched an E-Learning Platform offering New Employee Induction Training which has been specifically tailored for the needs of Hardware Retailers & Merchants.

FREE ONLINE NEW EMPLOYEE INDUCTION TRAINING FOR HAI MEMBERS

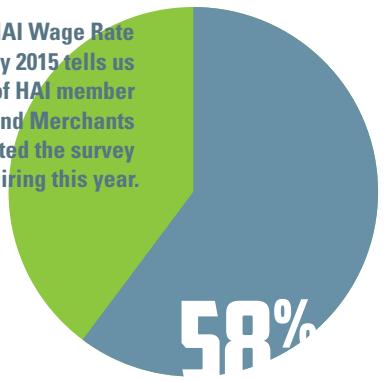
As a part of our continued expansion of member services, our E-Learning Platform will allow you and your colleagues to train and upskill at times which are convenient to the running of your business. The first course available on the platform is New Employee Induction training: a 7-module programme which will get your staff up to speed quickly and aid you in complying with some of your requirements as an employer under the Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994 and 2001. All you have to do is request login details for the number of staff you require to be trained and the new staff are ready to complete their induction!

Once your new member of staff has a username and password they will be able to access the login page of the platform from the Education area of our website:

hardwareassociation.ie/education (see Figure 1). When an employee logs in they are presented with a new

Figure 1

The HAI Wage Rate Survey 2015 tells us that 58% of HAI member Retailers and Merchants who completed the survey intend on hiring this year.



employee form and induction checklists for you both to fill out (see Figure 2). They then complete 7 modules and 5 exams, at a time convenient to your business. Topics range from general day-to-day HR policies on workplace requirements according to Irish Employment Law (disciplinary procedures, holidays and absenteeism etc.) right through to how to merchandise and sell hardware goods, and, an introduction to Health and Safety to complement any required H&S training. The topics are:

- Topic 1: Introduction to Hardware Retailing in Ireland**
- Topic 2: Things I Need to Know on Day One**
- Topic 3: Product and Service Range – to come!**
- Topic 4: Basics of Merchandising**
- Topic 5: Customer Service and Up-Selling**
- Topic 6: Housekeeping in Your Store**
- Topic 7: Introduction to Health, Safety and Welfare**

 New Employee Record Form										
<p>Surname: _____</p> <p>First Name(s): _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>Telephone Number(s): _____</p> <p>Email Address: _____</p> <p>Date of Birth: _____</p> <p>PPS No: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> P45 Attached <input type="checkbox"/> 12A Form Attached</p>										
<p>Employment Commencing Date: _____</p> <p>Role: _____</p> <p>Salary / Wage: _____</p>										
<p>Bank Name: _____</p> <p>Bank Address: _____</p> <p>Account No: _____ Sort Code: _____</p>										
<p>Emergency Contact Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>Telephone Number(s): _____</p>										
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Figure 2

To access the HAI E-Learning Platform you must be a member. For membership enquiries please contact Jim on 012980969 or jim@hardwareassociation.ie.

DID YOU KNOW?

HAI provides **free** HR management resources. We also provide a number of materials to aid you in the HR management of your business. All members will have recently received registration details for the Members' Area of the Hardware Association Website. Here (along with much more) you can find a template Employee Handbook and Contracts of Employment, and, updates on Employment Law. As a member you can also avail of a free consultation on a HR issue with Tommy Smyth & Associates. Please login to the member's area of our website for further details. Please contact Amanda on 01 298 0969 for Members' Area registration details.

5 Stages of Merchandising

Now we are going to look at the 5 stages involved in Merchandising. You must complete each stage in order to ensure your display area is designed and laid out correctly.

- Stage 1** • Shelf Preparation
- Stage 2** • First In First Out (FIFO)
- Stage 3** • Product Placement
- Stage 4** • Facing Off
- Stage 5** • Signage, Pricing and Labelling

The basics of merchandising, Topic 4 on the Platform.

Along with the advantage of flexible and independent learning, employers can receive reports which monitor time actively spent by employees on each module, and on their performance in online assessments. New Employee Induction Training will enable you to assess whether a new employee sufficiently understands what is required of them in their new role. The Employee Induction Course is just the first of a number of planned online training initiatives. Future modules include online product training from suppliers. Keep an eye out for the HAI monthly email newsletters for more updates! If you have any suggestions on training that you would be interested in HAI providing for your business, please contact us!

All HAI members will receive unlimited access to our New Employee Induction Training until the 31st December, 2015. To receive COMPLIMENTARY logins for your employees for the HAI New Employee Induction Training, please contact Amanda on 01 2980969 or email amanda@hardwareassociation.ie

MOVING AHEAD

Are you a distributor with a presence in the industrial or construction industry? Abracs Ltd have their feet firmly placed on Irish soil and they have brought their extensive range of products and market leading service with them. If you stock abrasives, consumables or allied products there is a lot to be gained by joining forces with Abracs. The company is making significant investment in the Irish market with a vision to become the country's recognised leader in abrasive supply. As a result of range expansion, increased marketing channels and driving ambition, Abracs has experienced seven consecutive years of double digit growth and with worldwide demand for abrasives forecast to expand, the company is ideally positioned to maximise their evolving customer needs.

COMPANY PROFILE

Abracs has over 25 years' experience specialising in the supply of abrasives and accessories to wholesale distribution channels serving industry sectors including metal fabrication, engineering, construction, hire, automotive, aerospace, nuclear, offshore and rail. Established in 1989 as a supplier to the welding industry, in 2013 this once family owned company was sold to the existing management team with a vision to disrupt the abrasive landscape and become the undisputed benchmark for abrasive consumables.

HERE TO STAY

With a solid foundation in the supply of abrasives and accessories, Abracs is committed to developing the business and expanding into new markets and product categories. Their newly appointed Irish representative Martin Brennan has over 25 years experience in the local abrasives market, having worked for many of the leading manufacturers and distributors including Marchrist, Saint-Gobain and most recently Tyrolit. Martin is responsible for growing Abracs' share of the Irish market, spearheading a new drive to raise awareness of the company's product portfolio and unrivalled customer service record.

PRODUCT LINE BREADTH

Abracs is the definition of a 'one stop shop'. By offering one of the broadest ranges of abrasives, accessories and allied products they are able to cater to many different industries and markets.

UNRIVALLED STOCK HOLDING

Abracs holds £1 Million+ worth of stock at any one time with almost 100% stock availability. As a result they offer swift delivery from their York based headquarters.

BUILT TO PERFORM

Build quality is of the highest importance. It is shaped through the use of high grade materials, supplies and stringent in-house/field testing. All products are Abracs Quality Assured guaranteeing that they're up to the task.

EXPERT SUPPORT

With over 25 years' experience supplying into market, a management team with over 100 years combined industry knowledge and a dedicated team of customer service advisors – Abracs is one of the top providers of customer support, with a deep bench of technical experts at hand.

SAFETY

Abracs has recognition and approval with various governing bodies including O.S.A. (Organisation for Safety of Abrasives), Link Up and ISO accreditation. Abracs is proud to be an active member of the British Abrasives Federation.



THE NEW FACE OF ABRASIVES ON THE IRISH MARKET

DISTRIBUTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Abracs has enjoyed a rich relationship with thousands of distributors since 1989. The proposition is to EXPECT MORE. More sales through satisfied customers. More customer loyalty. More winning over of first-time users. With Abracs, distributors will find a supplier with the right industry DNA to not just talk about these advantages but actively deliver on them.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Abracs works hard to make sure customers feel valued by providing high quality products which help them work smarter, safer and at a competitive price. Abracs is now one of the most recognised and trusted abrasive suppliers in the UK.

PRODUCT EVOLUTION

Constant development and evolution of the product range has been a significant driving factor in the success of Abracs. Over the past three years, the company has been in the middle of its biggest product offensive.

The company has moved from an original product range comprising abrasive cutting and grinding discs to a range that covers the full spectrum of abrasive applications.

Cutting and grinding products, jigsaw blades, rail products, flap discs, sanding discs, surface conditioning products, mounted wheels, non-woven finishing products, diamond blades, hole saws, coated abrasives, wire brushes and other accessories. Several more new products are due for launch later this year.

THE FUTURE

The company has its sights firmly set on continuing to execute its long-term strategy of becoming **NUMBER ONE** in the UK and Irish abrasive sectors. An export division, set-up in 2014 is seen as a catalyst for growth and has already yielded significant results. Further priority initiatives include expansion of its UK and Irish distribution channels through strong brand support, robust product development and continuous improvement of the value proposition.

Become one of the first to deal with Abracs directly in the Irish market and experience our personal service, rely on our product quality and share our success.

Follow the **ABRACS** success story at:

www.abracs.com

WHY CHOOSE ABRACS?



PRODUCT PERFORMANCE



QUALITY ASSURANCE

EST. 1989



ESTABLISHED REPUTATION

UNBEATABLE SERVICE

3 EASY STEPS TO BECOMING A DISTRIBUTOR

STEP 1

Contact us to talk about your interests and business needs

STEP 2

We will tailor a package to your industry sector and individual requirements

STEP 3

Your dedicated account team will open your account and ensure satisfaction

CONTACT THE ABRACS TEAM TODAY



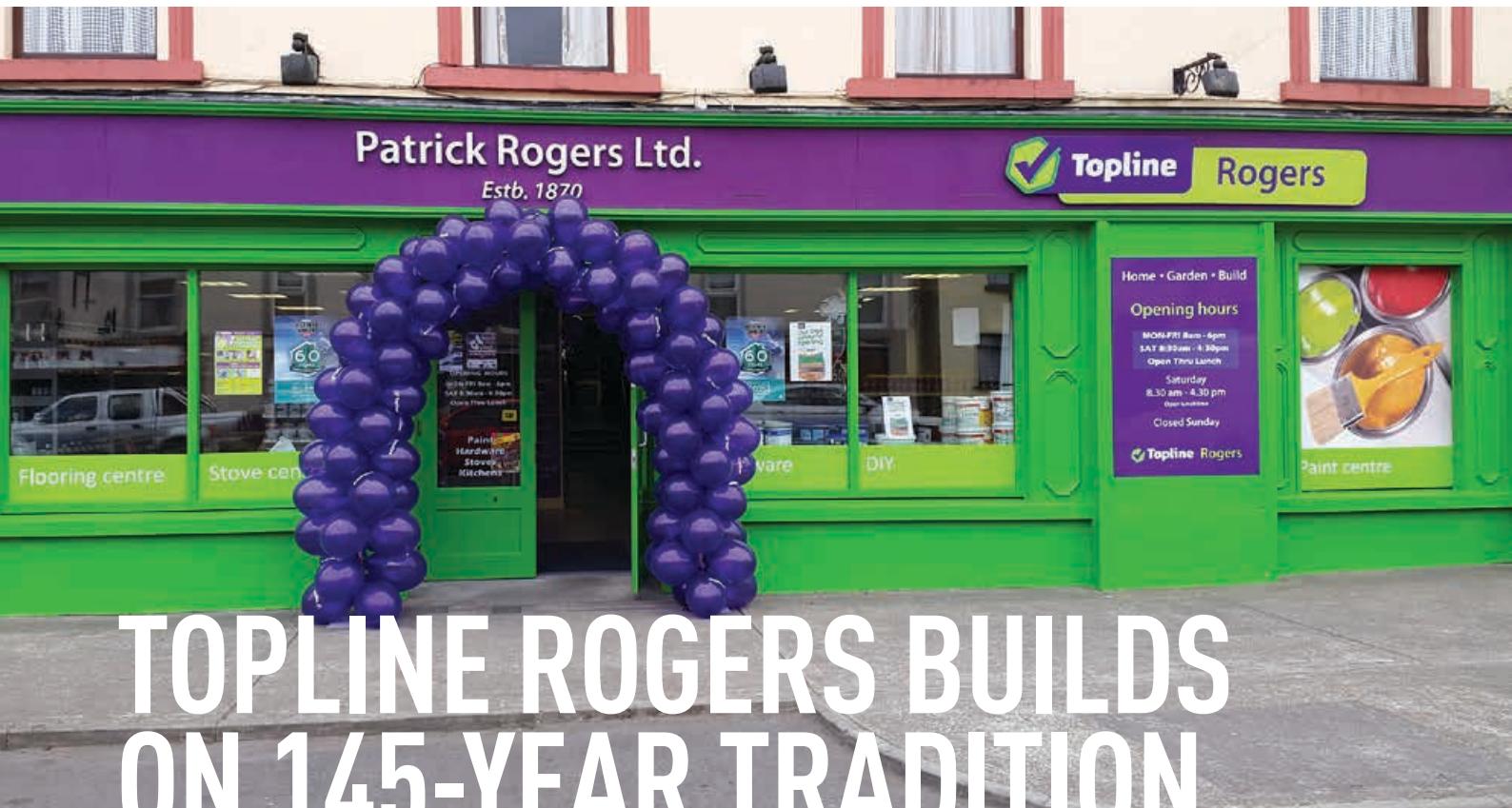
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TOPLINE ROGERS BUILDS ON 145-YEAR TRADITION

Topline Rogers in Ballymote, Co. Sligo celebrates 145 years in business this year. The Hardware Journal editor, Bernard Potter, visited the premises recently to talk to the latest generation of the Rogers family entrusted with this unique retail heritage.

Brothers Padraic and Micheál Rogers run the Topline Rogers Store, a longtime landmark in the town of Ballymote. It's a legacy (see panel on opposite page) that gives them both a sense of pride and an awareness of the challenges of bringing that heritage forward. Padraic comments: "Of course, we're proud of the longevity of the business and the legacy that we're a part of but we're also conscious of our responsibility to build on the achievements of the past and to steer the business forward."

Eye-catching

With its striking colour combination of purple and green, the store front catches the eye straightaway although the frontage doesn't begin to reflect the scale of the operation inside. Available retail space of 8,000 square feet stretches back from that frontage and, out back, there's a half acre of yard and two large warehouse sheds.

The store and yard serves a customer base that encompasses a 35 to 40-mile radius around Ballymote. Padraic says: "Our customers are from all over Sligo, north and south, and the customer base even stretches a little into north Leitrim."

Customer spending has been on a gentle upward trend since early spring of 2014: "People have been more inclined to spend a little, looking at projects like floor upgrades,

door replacements, purchases of stoves and upgrading of kitchens."

The new building regulations have not had a negative impact on the business, according to Micheál: "The regulations are making everyone more conscious of the importance of quality materials and products which is ultimately a positive thing for all of us, including builders merchants. From a retailing point of view, we work hard to ensure that we're fully informed on all product specifications and we liaise closely with our suppliers on items such as CE markings and so on. Overall, though, working with the new regulations hasn't been particularly onerous."

Adapting to survive and thrive

The store that Padraic and Micheál run today is significantly different to what it was pre-2010. For such a long-established business, the threat presented by the downturn was particularly troubling. "I'll admit there were some sleepless nights. Of course, we were conscious of the many generations that the business had passed through and we wanted to protect that legacy.

"We had to make radical changes in a very short space of time, including major changes in our product mix. We identified very quickly that we needed to shift the balance of our business to the retail side."



THE ROGERS HERITAGE

Today's modern Topline Rogers store, along with its extensive yard and warehousing space, had its origins as a small tea room, no more than a couple of hundred feet in area, opened in 1870 by Padraic and Micheál's great-great-grandfather, Patrick and his wife, Constance, better known as "Concie".

The couple worked hard to make a success of their new business and diversified in response to their customers' needs, expanding into lighter hardware, grocery and agricultural supplies.

In 1916, the couple's son, Andrew, took over the business, consolidating and developing it through the decades until the early 1940s. That's when the business was passed on to Paddy Rogers, grandfather of Padraic and Micheál, and a man whose entrepreneurial reputation and technical know-how was renowned. Just

one of the many stories Padraic has heard over the years concerned a man who arrived to Paddy's doorstep at 11pm one night with a broken chainsaw: "Apparently, Paddy ended up not just repairing the broken item but agreeing a trade-in and the sale of a new chainsaw to his late night visitor. All by midnight!" Padraic's father, Michael, and mother, Carmel, took over the reins of the business in the 1970s. They continued to develop the store, expanding the building materials and home improvement elements of the business. As Micheál and Padraic recall, their parents also faced the challenge of recessionary years in the eighties. Padraic notes: "For both of us, when faced with the challenges of the recent downturn, we took a lot of inspiration from knowing that they had faced similar difficulties and had successfully led the business through them."

That focus on retail also influenced Padraic and Micheál's decision to join Topline in 2010. Padraic recalls: "We felt it was a perfect fit for us. Topline is strong on the retail side, which was an area we wanted to focus on, and which we continue to concentrate on, as we believe it provides a solid and dependable basis to grow the business." Today, the ratio of retail to builders business within the operation is about 60:40, he says, and it's a ratio that he believes will be a viable and sustainable balance for the foreseeable future. One of the most obvious aspects of this retail emphasis is the large paint section that welcomes customers in the front area of the store: "As part of a comprehensive re-design of the store in conjunction with Topline's design team, we put a lot of work into the paint section to ensure that we had an effective layout with strong customer appeal. Hand in hand with that, we introduced the Dulux range which had not been previously available in Ballymote. There was a

tremendous response from customers and the department has gone from strength to strength since."

New realism

While battling through the downturn was tough for everyone, it has led to a new realism on both sides of the counter. Micheál says: "Customers are more prudent in their spending these days. They're looking for value for money and there's been a noticeable shift to the use of debit cards over the last few years."

"From our perspective, the builders merchants business is at a lower level but it is more sustainable. There has been an increase in the numbers of customers coming in who are doing building projects. People building houses now tend to have the financing in place and the projects are usually modest one-offs."

He also has come to see credit insurance as a valuable tool:

A DAY TO REMEMBER

Topline Rogers in Ballymote, Co. Sligo celebrated 145 years in business with special celebrations on Saturday, June 13. Several months in the planning, the day was a great success with almost 1,000 people attending. Padraic Rogers noted: "We'd like to express our gratitude and thanks to our customers, and our staff, both past and present, for the support they've given us over many, many years. Without them, we wouldn't be here."

"I have to say that while it is an additional expense, it is a useful service and means your debtors' book is covered. And it gives you a little bit of extra peace of mind."

Getting involved

Most stores have some form of community involvement but for Rogers it's a fundamental commitment, according to Padraic: "We like to support local initiatives and we believe if something is good for Ballymote and the locality, it's good for us too." The business supports the local GAA, the soccer team, the golf club, the agricultural show, the heritage group, the Ballymote Christmas tree lights, and the St Patrick's Day parade. On top of all that, Padraic is secretary of the local drama group and an actor with extensive experience, who has had starring roles in plays such as *The Field*, *The Year Of The Hiker*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, and *Juno and The Paycock*. Involvement in the community also means co-operation with other local businesses. Padraic and Micheál got together with a couple of other shop owners in Ballymote recently to organise a combined advertising campaign in the local newspaper. Padraic explains: "As a unit, we were able to undertake a more extensive campaign and secure better rates. The five-week campaign worked well and all three businesses saw significant spikes in customer footfall as a result." A high level of sustained promotional effort is put behind the store all year round. In addition to advertising on local radio station, Ocean FM and in the local papers, *The Sligo Champion* and *The Sligo Weekender*, the business maintains a strong social media presence with the store's Facebook page.

Bright future

Micheál and Padraic are confident about the future, based on the steps they have taken, and continue to take, in reshaping their business to meet the changing requirements of their customers, a strategy that, in one way or another has been consistent throughout each generation's stewardship of the business. That positive outlook is further strengthened by their confidence in the team they have in place. They have nine full-time staff, including their mother, Carmel, and four part-timers. The team includes a number of long-serving staff members such as Patsy McDonogh, who's been with Rogers for 17 years and John Underwood, who's been working in the Rogers yard for 18 years. Padraic believes that good staff are vital and hugely important in attracting customers to the store: "When you have a team

as experienced as we've got, there's an unrivalled level of product knowledge and expertise built up over the years. People come to us for that product knowledge and the quality of personal service that's provided. They trust our team." While Padraic and Micheál exude optimism, there's no danger of complacency. 'It doesn't fall in your lap, you have to chase it' is a business motto that Padraic repeats several times by way of explaining his approach to the business. He comments: "The economy is getting better and things are looking up but there are no guarantees in this business. Looking to the future, we have to continue to be flexible and adaptable in responding to customers, we have to watch costs and manage credit carefully and, as a team, we have to continue to work hard to ensure that the store is a leading example of modern hardware retailing with a bright future, as well as a proud past."



Padraic's wife, Niamh Rogers with their children Caoimhe and Ailise.

A unique contribution

Padraic and Micheál want to especially acknowledge the role their sister Fiona Rogers, who died earlier this year, played in the development of the store's unique identity. Padraic commented: "Fiona made a major contribution to the survival and development of the business, for many years running a grocery retail space within the store which was a highly effective footfall creator and an important part of community life in Ballymote."

Larsen has been supplying the market here for 40 years.

LARSEN LOOKS TO EXPANSION IN 2015 AND BEYOND

“Were you founded in Denmark?” That was the first question I asked when I arrived at the port of Belfast headquarters of this familiar building products manufacturer, one of the newest supplier members of HAI, writes Annemarie Harte, Chief Executive Officer, HAI. The name ‘Larsen’ might lead you to believe that there is a strong association with our Viking ancestors but that misconception is soon put to rights.

“We are 100% Irish other than the name,” says Peter McGill, Managing Director of Larsen, “I thought the name Larsen would give us more of a global feel, but we have always been proud to state ‘Made in Ireland’.” Now, 40 years on from starting to supply the market, it seems to be working a treat, their latest venture will soon see Larsen supplying to a customer in Perth, Western Australia. Over 140 people work in the factories and offices based in Belfast and Dublin. Peter would like to recruit at least 50 more staff in the next 18 months to cover the envisaged growth in the business. New markets as well as the breadth of products that they manufacture have kept Larsen almost recession proof. “Making products rather than solely distributing products has undoubtedly helped,” according to Peter. Limiting exposure in the first instance, and tighter credit controls in the UK, their largest market, have also helped this manufacturer to grow despite the collapse in construction activity in the South. Larsen have long supplied the construction industry and builders merchants from Belmullet to Bantry and Dublin to Donegal with its range of several hundred products including

wood treatments, building chemicals such as plasticisers and waterproofers, technical mortars as well as tile adhesives, floor levellers, sealers, sealants and repair mortars. Opened in 2007, with an investment of £8 million, its state-of-the-art powder plant, in the shadow of the famous Samson and Goliath cranes, can produce 2,000 25kg bags per hour with over 70% of raw materials sourced locally. Although Larsen’s products are not made in the Republic of Ireland, the bulk of the raw materials are, thus benefiting the wider Irish economy. Unfortunately this isn’t good enough to receive the seal of approval from Guaranteed Irish but they do lay claim to being the largest manufacturer of this range of builders merchants powder and liquid-based products in all Ireland, with an office in Dublin and 11 sales representatives working across the island as a whole.

Quick responders

Peter emphasised the ability of Larsen to respond quickly to customer enquiries through knowing their customers and understanding their business.” Our 11 sales staff mean that we really have the structures in place to keep in contact with

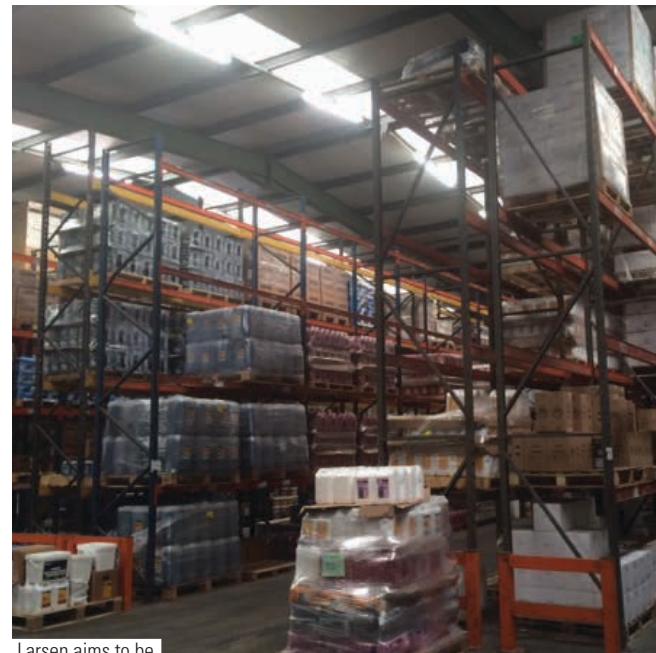


Although Larsen's products are not made in the Republic of Ireland, the bulk of the raw materials are, thus benefiting the wider Irish economy.

our customers and help their businesses grow!" Having viewed their production plants, Larsen are certainly able to supply quickly as there are no problems with ferry shipping and the motorway network constructed during the Celtic Tiger era means that Cork is less than five hours from Belfast. Larsen has in-house laboratories at their base as well as research and development facilities. Quality control is paramount, all batches are electronically recorded and each batch is tested with samples retained from each batch. With such a vast range of activities and products, Larsen means different things to different customers. Peter comments: 'Some people know us for concrete admixtures, some for flooring screeds and some for our merchants' range of products. While others know us only for our contracting or piling services.' Originally focused on mortar and plasters, Larsen has graduated to seven key divisions of the business – tiling, flooring, builders merchants, streetscape, admixtures, highways and civils. Peter says: "It didn't evolve in any particular order but there's plenty to keep us busy." I couldn't help but notice the Pink Waterproofer in the display on show at the HQ and it struck me that there must be a knowledge gap between what the end customer is aware of and what the builder suggests. Therein lies the role of the builders merchant, as a font of building material knowledge and problem-solver extraordinaire.

Re-branding

Larsen recently undertook a rebranding exercise, as well as revamping their merchandising with some of their products, aiming to ensure sub-contractors are fully informed of the availability and diversity of their products,



Larsen aims to be always well-stocked.

while also educating their builders merchants. Without this dedicated assistance from all suppliers and manufacturers, it would make the job of the builders merchant much more challenging. Keeping on top of new products, as well as ensuring CE markings are straightforward, and then translating that into excellent customer service is a distinct advantage in such a competitive trade. This challenge faces our members every day, so fast, informative and friendly assistance, locally, will undoubtedly help. Some familiar parts of Dublin have also fallen under Larsen's spell, by way of their separate piling and specialist contracting businesses. Buildings including Liffey Valley Shopping Centre, Croke Park, Christ Church and the Anglesea stand at the RDS as well as Alfie Byrne's pub, have had the Larsen Foundation and Larsen Contracts treatment. Supply of tiling materials, however, is Larsen's biggest division contributing 25% of turnover with its extensive range of high-performance, fully CE-marked adhesives together with grouts, waterproofing kits and tile-maintenance products.



If you have a story to tell as a supplier or manufacturer in the Irish market, please contact Annemarie on 01 289 0969 or Annemarie@hardwareassociation.ie for more information.

Allied Merchants Buying Association announces New Chairman & Vice-Chairman of Board of Directors

Dennis O'Connor has been appointed Chairman of Allied Merchants Buying Association, the leading low cost group with strategically placed members who work with partnered suppliers. Dennis is Operations Director of HPC, who recently opened a new store in Glasnevin growing HPC's number of stores to nine throughout Leinster. He succeeds John Murphy as Chairman of AMBA and, as one of the founding members, Dennis is looking forward to his term as chairman of the fastest growing builder's merchants group in Ireland.

Dennis said: "I am humbled by this privilege to represent my colleagues as chairman of the Board. I appreciate the full scope of this responsibility and I look forward to leading our Board of Directors in executing our strategic plan".

Allied Merchants Buying Association has achieved unprecedented success by consistently focusing on their members. The fundamental aim is to be the leading low cost, highly professional group with strategically placed members that work with partnered suppliers.

Dennis said: "We came together as a group of like-minded individuals with a view to driving the primary focus of a buying group which is to grow the market share of participating suppliers while improving the net profitability of members. Since 2011, we have grown to 13 members with 35 stores nationwide. We have continuously recognised improved trading terms with suppliers across a broad range. We have strengthened the buying power of our members and our trading terms including cost prices, credit terms, rebates and settlement discounts, are improving year on year with suppliers. This has allowed us to drive sales on behalf of our suppliers to increase their market share but also allows our members to drive margin".

In 2015, Allied Merchants Buying Association will partner, levy-free, with 110 Approved Suppliers with a turnover in excess of €70m. They are currently tracking a 22% increase on Turnover with Approved Suppliers when compared to Turnover in 2014 with the same 110 Suppliers. This is significant in the context that the group looks to partner with suppliers who have a mutual interest in growing business. Dennis commented: "The members of AMBA's board of directors have an influential voice and play an integral role in ensuring the long-term growth and success of Allied Merchants Buying Association. Together we will continue to drive AMBA's significant impact on all our members. There is an enormous level of ambition within this group with a hunger to focus solely on our members and making



Dennis O'Connor



Paul O'Shea

them more profitable. Allied Merchants always concentrates on continuously outperforming itself through the delivery of profits to our members and market share to our suppliers and that is something I am very proud to be a part of"

AMBA's leadership team has been strengthened further with the announcement of Paul O'Shea as Vice-Chairman. Paul said: "I am honoured to be appointed Vice Chairman and I am looking forward to supporting Dennis in his role, as well as working with the Board to deliver our strategy and shaping Allied Merchants to advance further as the leading low cost group". MD O'Shea & Sons joined at the beginning of 2015 and Paul already recognises the benefits of Allied Merchants Buying Association. "I have better relationships with my suppliers and no double administration cost is a small part of the savings I have enjoyed since joining. I work closer with fellow members as we work for each other to make ourselves more profitable. Within our group, member contribution is excellent as members have total control over the decisions of the group and I look forward to continually working together to drive AMBA forward.

CEO of Allied Merchants Buying Association, Keith Giblin said: "We are extremely pleased and honoured to have

Dennis and Paul's continued leadership and support on the board. The dedication and commitment of such prominent members of the merchant industry enable us to continue our strategic growth as a group. Dennis has been a member of the board since 2011 and has made an outstanding contribution to the success of AMBA to date. Both Dennis and Paul are proven leaders and their experience, insight and business vision will prove invaluable as our group enters its next chapter of expansion.

The results we have achieved to date require the best people in these positions and the appointment of Dennis and Paul demonstrates our commitment. The opportunity ahead for Allied Merchants is vast, but to seize it, we must focus clearly, move faster and continue to transform".

He added "I would also like to take this opportunity to thank John Murphy for his commitment and wise counsel as Chairman over the last year and as CEO from 2011 to 2014."

John Murphy stated: "We're fortunate to have Dennis and Paul's vision and professionalism as part of our Board of Directors as we move into a new stage of growth. John, who remains on the board, added: "Over the years, I have come to know and admire the management team, now ably led by Dennis O'Connor, and I am confident we have the leadership and vision to ensure our continued momentum and success."



The winners and nominees, back row: Ollie Smyth, Chadwicks Stillorgan; Tadgh O'Connor, Tadgh O'Connor, Newcastle West, Tony Duggan, Chadwicks, Kilkenny; Brendan O'Reilly, TJ O'Mahony Ballymount; Charlie Byrne, Chadwicks Bray; Tommy Haughey, TJ O'Mahony, Kilshane; Robert Hickey, Heiton Buckley Limerick; David Shakeshaft, Chadwicks Coolock; Laurence McDaid, The Cope Builders Providers; Mark O'Mahony, Heiton Buckley Waterford; John Hassett, Topline Hassett; Nigel Boyle, Richard Boyle and Sons; David Andrews, Topline Mullingar; Felicity Week, McMahons Dunmanway; Gerry Tobin, Davies; Tony Furlong, TJ O'Mahony Ballymount; Liam McEvoy, Telfords Portlaoise; Eamonn Synott, Chadwicks Plumb Centre Walkinstown; Pat Stakelum, Stakelums Home & Hardware; and Hugh Quinn, Quinn Supply stores. Front row: Tommy Maguire, Chadwicks Navan; Stanley Nairn, Heiton Buckley Sligo; Anthony Lotty, Chadwicks Midleton; Tadhg Donohoe, Chairman, Octabuild; Taoiseach Enda Kenny; Hugh O'Donnell, President, Hardware Association Ireland; Ronan Kelleher, Kellehers Topline Hardware; Pat Power, JP Corry Cahir; and Peter Cosgrave, Grange Builders Providers.

CHADWICKS, KILKENNY WINS NATIONAL OCTABUILD AWARD

Chadwicks, Ormonde Retail Park, Kilkenny, won both the national and Leinster category awards in the national Octabuild Builders Merchant Awards 2015.

Tony Duggan, Branch Manager, said: "We're delighted to have been chosen as the National Award winners at the Octabuild Builders Merchants Awards. We're just a small part of a bigger organisation and it's an honour to win this award. We enjoy great customer loyalty from the market, and we believe this is based on excellent customer service, comprehensive stocks, and competitive pricing."

Chadwicks' parent company was first established in 1902, and is now part of the Grafton Group Plc. While benefitting from the advantages of being part of Ireland's largest builders merchants, they are very much focused on serving the local market.

The award winners were announced at a presentation dinner on May 21st in the Round Room of the Mansion House in Dublin. This was the 19th Octabuild Builders Merchant Awards. The companies who organise the awards as Octabuild are: Gyproc, Glennon Brothers, Dulux Paints, Irish Cement, Kingspan Insulation, Sanbra Fyffe, Tegral and Wavin. Between them, the Octabuild companies have over 650 years manufacturing experience in Ireland, directly employ

over 1,200 people here and have over 20,000 quality products available every day for Irish builders merchants. Speaking at the awards, the newly elected Chairman of Octabuild, Tadhg Donohoe, said: "All of the companies who were nominated for these awards are among the best in the business. They have been judged in these awards on their customer service, business focus, management and premises." This year, 12 category awards were presented. A Lifetime Achievement award was also made on the night to Eddie Kelly, Managing Director, Grafton Merchanting ROI. Introducing the awards, Taoiseach Enda Kenny said: "Employment in the construction sector is up nearly 20,000 in the year reflecting a return to more sustainable levels. The Government is supporting a recovery in the construction industry, but only if it is based on the highest international standards in quality, excellence and trust." He congratulated the Octabuild members who, he said, "make a significant contribution to the Irish building and construction industry, and will continue to contribute to its growth and to its strength."

THE WINNERS

CATEGORY	WINNERS
National winner	Chadwicks, Ormonde Retail Park, Co. Kilkenny
Connaught/Ulster	The Cope Builders Providers, Dungloe, Co. Donegal
Munster	Heiton Buckley, Ballysimon, Co. Limerick
Leinster	Chadwicks, Ormonde Retail Park, Co. Kilkenny
Dublin	T.J. O'Mahony, Ballymount Retail Centre, Walkinstown, Dublin 12
Cork	Kellehers Topline Hardware, Bandon, Co. Cork
Business focus	Davies Ltd., Raheny, Dublin 5
Management	Richard Boyle & Sons, Killorglin, Co. Kerry
Customer service	Telfords, Clonminam Business Park, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
Premises	Tadhg O'Connor, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick
Innovation	Heiton Buckley, Co. Sligo
Independent/owner managed	Stakelums Home & Hardware, Thurles, Co. Tipperary
Multi-location branch	Chadwicks, Boghall, Bray, Co. Wicklow
Lifetime achievement	Eddie Kelly, Grafton Merchandising ROI



Taoiseach Enda Kenny (centre) with the Octabuild Board (left to right) Declan Smyth, Gyproc; Seamus O'Donohoe, Dulux; Jim Loughran, Kingspan Insulation; Mike Glennon, Glennon Brothers; Tadhg Donohoe, Tegral, Chairman, Octabuild; Liam Barrett, Irish Cement; Noel Conroy, Sanbra Fyffe; and Michael O'Donohoe, Wavin.



Tony Duggan, Manager, Chadwicks, Ormonde Retail Park, Kilkenny (right), receiving the Octabuild National Builders Merchant of the Year Award from Tadhg Donohoe, Chairman, Octabuild.



Lifetime achievement award winner, Eddie Kelly, Grafton Merchandising ROI receiving his award from Tadhg Donohoe, Chairman, Octabuild. Also in the picture are Des Byrne (left) who read the citation and Hugh O'Donnell, President, Hardware Association Ireland.



Whiteriver now stock over 200 types of laminate and engineered floors.

A look at Europe-wide trends in wood flooring indicates a fall in import levels overall and a continued preference for oak flooring, while here at home, Irish flooring suppliers continue to expand their ranges and have an optimistic outlook based on our recovering economy and the gradual return of consumer confidence.

OAK REMAINS POPULAR OPTION IN FLOORING

Imports of wood flooring into the European Union increased 4.9% to 29.7 million sq. metres last year after declining steadily between 2010 and 2013. In 2014, wood flooring deliveries from China, the single largest supplier, increased by 4.9% to 18.6 million sq.m. China accounted for 63% of total EU imports in 2014, exactly the same proportion as the previous year. In spite of the recent growth, imports in 2014 were still well below the record levels achieved between 2005 and 2008. There has been no significant recovery from the slump during the financial crisis when imports plummeted from 52.8 million sq.m in 2008 to just 35.6 million sq.m in 2009.

Imports from outside of the EU into the UK, where there was a robust recovery in construction sector activity last year, recorded double-digit growth of 13% to 5.79 million sq.m in 2014. Imports into Germany also increased strongly, by 14% to 4.72 million sq.m, while imports into Belgium rose 7% to 3.92 million sq.m.

While total EU wood flooring imports increased in 2014, the European Wood Flooring Federation (FEF) reports that consumption probably declined last year in many European countries.

According to an FEF estimate published by the international parquet federation Global Flooring Alliance (GFA), European

Canada has seen a steady continuation of growth in sales of real wood flooring since early 2014.

wood flooring consumption fell 3.8% in 2014, after slipping 2.6% the year before. Consumption was 82.7 million sq.m in 2013 and is believed to have been around 80 million sq.m in 2014.

Oak retains popularity

When it comes to wood species, the FEP sees a continuing dominance of oak in the overall sales mix, while the share of exotic woods has declined further. Wider boards and "natural look" flooring remains very popular, according to the FEP. The lasting trend towards oak flooring was also apparent at the Domotex flooring show in Germany during January. The show attracted 1,323 exhibitors from 63 countries, covering all sectors of the flooring industry. With approximately 40,000, visitor numbers were slightly higher this year than at the comparable Domotex in 2013. According to the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), oak accounted for around 80-90% of most Domotex wood flooring exhibitors' product sales. During its visit to the show, AHEC also found that the "rustic oak look is still



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very much in fashion, and European oak is the preferred supply." American white oak would primarily be used in the architectural sector. AHEC also witnessed a trend towards dark "smoked" oak.

In terms of product specifications AHEC noted that Europe seemed to continue to move more towards using engineered flooring instead of solid wood flooring.

European producers of laminate flooring sold 465 million sq.m worldwide in 2014, compared to 463 million sq.m the year before, according to statistics compiled by the European Producers of Laminate Flooring (EPLF) and published by GFA. This is a rise of just 0.4% over 2013.

This seems to confirm reports from the wood flooring sector that there is a growing preference for cheaper laminates over real wood floors in those markets particularly hard hit by the economic downturn.

Sales of laminate flooring in the UK increased by 10% to 32 million sq.m in 2014 on the back of a growing housing sector and comparatively strong consumer confidence.

(globalwood.org)

Irish suppliers have positive outlook

Within the broader framework of Europe wide trends, Irish flooring suppliers continue to expand their ranges and have an

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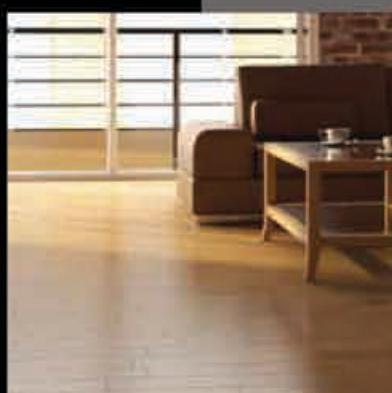
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protein free **super flow**

SLC1500 from Larsen.

ON THE LEVEL

SLC1500 is a proven high quality, fast track, universal self-levelling compound with excellent flow for the levelling of concrete floors before the application of floor finishes, according to Larsen. Especially suitable for large scale new-build and refurbishment projects, Larsen says the rapid setting SLC1500 achieves a superfine finish making it ideal for the installation of floor coverings. Used extensively throughout Ireland, Larsen SLC1500 complements Larsen's extensive range of technical mortars, screeds, underlays, primers and floor repair compounds.



Specialist Wood
Flooring Products

optimistic outlook based on our recovering economy and the gradual return of consumer confidence.

Whiteriver Group has seen very positive sales growth for its flooring range in the first half of 2015, according to Iain Wogan. This success has been built on service and being customer orientated, he said, together with offering the largest range of laminate and engineered flooring in the market place. Whiteriver now stock over 200 types of laminate and engineered floors off the shelf in their warehouses.

Iain said: "Laminate floors have performed very well this year and there has been increased demand for high quality 10mm/12mm laminates in grades AC4 and AC5. Whiteriver Group has responded to this demand and is currently introducing 20 new products in 10mm/12mm."

Engineered flooring may have lost ground to laminate in the past, but Iain can see a growing demand for engineered flooring as consumer confidence returns. Display layout continues to be very important to creating an environment that makes it easy for the end consumer to make their choice. Whiteriver can offer their marketing experience to maximise your store's display potential.

Other trends of note for both laminate and engineered flooring are the growing demand for white and grey tones.

Whiteriver plans to continue investing in its business and he cites their new website, www.wrg.ie.

as an example of this commitment will provide their customers with very powerful sales tool that will provide added information and product images.

Steady growth

Canada has seen a steady continuation of growth in sales of real wood flooring month-on-month since early 2014. Laminate flooring sales are holding ground while wood flooring is growing albeit from a relatively low base, the company states.

Charlie Hamilton, Managing Director, Canada commented: "The flooring market is benefiting from the Home Renovation Incentive Scheme and the steady, if not dramatic, pull out of the tougher times.

The challenge for our retail customers has evolved, it's about trends and giving the end consumer a wider choice.

"The flooring industry worldwide closely follows furniture and kitchen trends, here lies an opportunity. We are 20 years in business this year and our focus at Canada is to work very closely with our retail partners in driving top line sale and increasing margin and market share in their respective markets."

Profit from Innovation

The new Aquat+ laminate flooring range

From Canada

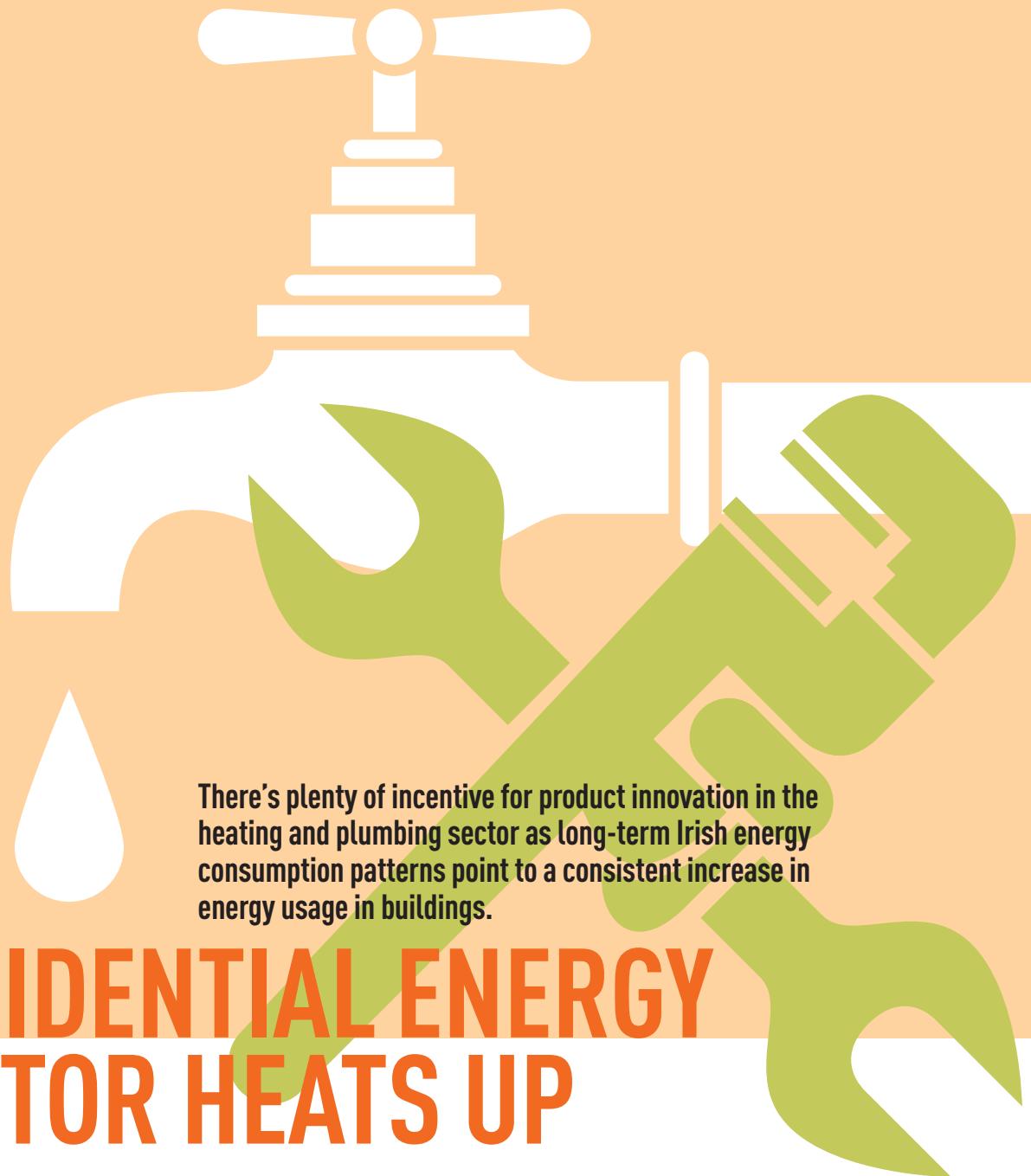
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There's plenty of incentive for product innovation in the heating and plumbing sector as long-term Irish energy consumption patterns point to a consistent increase in energy usage in buildings.

RESIDENTIAL ENERGY SECTOR HEATS UP

The SEAI's report, *Energy in Ireland 1990 – 2013*, provides an overview of residential heating over almost two and a half decades and analyses the major changes that have taken place in that time.

Primary energy use in the residential sector and services sector was considered collectively by the report as energy in buildings because most of the energy use is associated with heating/cooling and lighting the buildings. In 2013, primary energy in buildings accounted for 41% of primary energy supply. Overall, primary energy use in buildings increased by 22% since 1990 (0.9% per annum) and in 2013 it fell by 2.6%. According to the report, oil has become the dominant fuel in the residential sector, more than doubling its share from 17% in 1990 to 39% in 2010 but falling back to 33% in 2013. Electricity is the second most dominant energy form in the sector at 25%. Natural gas usage increased by a factor of almost six over the

period to become the third fuel of choice at 22% share. As regards floor area of dwellings and its implications for energy consumption, the evidence suggests that there has been a trend towards larger dwellings (although estate house floor area has remained stable since 2008) over the years from 1990 to 2013. Taken in isolation, this should have had a significant impact on the amount of energy demanded in the residential sector – bigger dwellings tend to have a larger demand for heating as they have a greater wall surface area and therefore higher heat loss. This has been offset somewhat by the increasing insulation standards promoted through iterations of the building regulations.

Other variables such as the changing fuel mix, more efficient heating systems, falling occupancy levels and the declining average number of persons per household have also had an impact. The full report is available to download at www.seai.ie/Publications/

HEATING AND PIPING

Looking to next winter, Irish suppliers have a swathe of innovative product ranges in place. Pipelife celebrated its 45th anniversary of manufacturing in Ireland in March 2015. One of the world's leading suppliers of plastic pipe systems, with manufacturing and sales locations in 26 countries, Pipelife says its Qual-PEX plumbing pipe was developed in Ireland and was the first PEX pipe in the world to be awarded the BS7291 Class S Kitemark in 1989 and the first PEX-B pipe in the world to gain water certification for the Scandinavian market.

Since its introduction, over 800,000,000 metres of Qual-PEX, 20 times the circumference of the earth, has been supplied to over 30 countries worldwide. The Qual-PEX range has expanded over the years and now includes pre-insulated Qual-PEX, insulated and ducted Qual-PEX for district heating applications, and Qual-PEX underfloor heating systems. A spokesperson for Pipelife comments: "Qual-PEX underfloor heating systems are Ireland's most popular custom-designed underfloor heating systems. The experience and expertise of our underfloor heating department coupled with the security of our design indemnity insurance, top quality products, and



comprehensive before and after sales technical support ensures that we offer an industry leading service in this growing segment of the residential and commercial market. Selling exclusively through merchants, our service is tailored to making the supply of UFH easy, professional and painless."

PUMP INNOVATION

Following on the success of Sanbra Fyffe's Tucson Circulating Pumps, Sanbra Fyffe introduced its new Tucson Automatic Low Decibel Booster pump this summer. This Booster Pump combines motor, pump, accumulator, pressure and flow switch, all in one unit. According to Sanbra Fyffe, key features of this pump include its compact size, robust construction, and its quiet operation, ≤ 55 dB (A) at 5 metres – that's less noise than the average dishwasher. With 1 HP and a max head of 32M /3.14 bar, this pump is suitable for domestic water supply, light commercial and irrigation use. Sanbra Fyffe's Tucson A-Rated 5 and 6 Metre Head Circulating Pumps continue to be the popular choice with plumbers, the company states. Fully compliant with the European Union ErP (Energy-related Products) directive, they exceed the benchmark for energy efficiency with an EEI rating of ≤ 0.20 .



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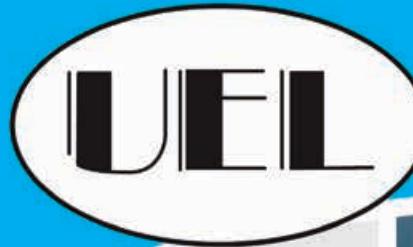
CONTINUED GROWTH

The last nine months have seen continued growth for Uppercross Enterprises across the heating and plumbing sector, the company states. "Thankfully, much of our business is not affected by the vagaries of the Irish construction market" commented Roy Moore, MD of Uppercross. "In our experience, the professional Irish Merchant is driven by the need to stock a quality, dependable plumbing product." While competition can sometimes lead suppliers to 'value engineer' their product offering, Uppercross are one of the only suppliers who hold NSAI accreditation for their Irish Compression fittings. "Our customers want a supplier with products that they can trust" continued Moore. He firmly believes that the Home Renovation Incentive Scheme, driven by the HAI, has been a huge boost to encouraging consumers to spend money improving and updating their homes which has been of huge benefit to the merchant trade and therefore to Uppercross. In addition, while water conservation has seen much of the media focus over the past eighteen months, his experience



is that consumers' main driver is attractive fittings for their kitchens and bathrooms, be it brassware or ceramics, furniture or accessories. Both Uppercross and Niko Ireland (the Ceramics and Bathroom Division of the UEL Group) have just launched their new 2015/16 catalogues which includes the latest offerings from both companies.

"Our customers are always looking for something new and innovative" continued Moore, "the challenge for us is to source it for them and always have it in stock and available. That level of customer service and quality will continue far into the future."



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Consumers don't like one-cent and two-cent coins.

ROUNDING COMES TO IRELAND

Consumers don't like one-cent and two-cent coins. They tend to be hoarded, lost or even thrown away. There is a solution, writes Ronnie O'Toole, Programme Manager of the National Rounding Rollout in the Central Bank.

This can be seen from the statistics. The Central Bank has produced 2.5 billion one-cent and two-cent coins since the Euro was introduced, equivalent to around 1,500 coins for every household. Yet no matter how many the Central Bank produce, retailers come back asking for more for one simple reason: they give the coins to consumers, but consumers put them straight into jam-jars.

Up and down

But a solution is on the way – rounding. This works simply. When a consumer is paying for a transaction in cash the total amount can be rounded down or up to the nearest five or ten cent. For example:

- ▶ one and two would be rounded down to zero;
- ▶ three and four would be rounded up to five;
- ▶ six and seven would be rounded down to five; and
- ▶ eight and nine would be rounded up to 10.

Many EU countries already operate rounding, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, Norway, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. In fact, the Australians melted their old one-cent coins down and used them in the bronze medals at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.

The initiative to bring rounding to Ireland came from the National Payments Plan (NPP). One of the recommendations of the NPP was to conduct a rounding trial in Wexford in 2013 to test consumer and retailer reaction. The trial was a resounding success with 85% of consumers and 100% of retailers surveyed believing that rounding should be applied nationally. Following on from the Wexford Trial, Rounding will be rolled out nationally from 28th October, 2015.

Gaining acceptance

For rounding to happen, both the retailer and the customer must accept it; both will have the right to use exact change. Rounding only takes place on the total bill, not on individual prices, so existing price points (for example items priced at 0.99c) will remain unchanged. Rounding will not apply to amounts being paid electronically, such as by debit card, credit card or store card. Where a retailer is applying rounding they can apply it automatically without asking the consumer – it will be up to the consumer to say if they don't want rounding applied.

So what will happen to support retailers in advance of 28th October? The Central Bank will co-ordinate a national consumer education campaign in advance of the launch date. Retailers should indicate that they are applying rounding through appropriate in-store signage. This could include, for example, a notice on entrance-doors or at the till. The Central Bank will be making suitable signage available to retailers in advance of the rollout on 28th October.

Informed well, Ireland will make this change easily. After all, we're good at making these changes – the euro-changeover being a case in point. Rounding will soon become accepted, and pretty soon you'll barely notice.

Ronnie O'Toole is Programme Manager of the National Rounding Rollout in the Central Bank. For any questions or queries on Rounding, retailers can contact the Central Bank directly on rounding@centralbank.ie.

Rounding will be rolled out nationally from 28th October 2015.



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Builders merchants continue to adopt innovative technologies to enhance management control and efficiencies in their businesses. Here we look at some of the newest packages available on the Irish market.

SURGE IN HI-TECH RETAIL SOLUTIONS FOR BUILDERS MERCHANTS

ALL-IN-ONE POS SOLUTION

AIB Merchant Services have announced the launch of Clover™, which it describes as "a revolutionary all-in-one, point-of-sale solution built to do much more than take cash payments." Listing Clover's capabilities, AIB Merchant Services say that it facilitates:

- ▶ accessing real time data in your store from anywhere;
- ▶ tracking your sales;
- ▶ noting which staff are clocked in and selling,
- ▶ monitoring your stock levels; and,
- ▶ improving efficiencies.

Clover can do all of this, where data is securely accessible everywhere you can access the internet, on any device with a browser, according to AIB Merchant Services.

Clover uses app technology to customise a retailer's Clover ePOS system to their specific needs. Hardware stores in Ireland can now use Clover to update their management accounts, and share stock-levels and pricing with an online website. Built around retailer needs, Clover is more than a regular till system, it is designed to give you more control over your business. It comes pre-installed with your appropriate product listing, so it's ready to go straight away.

One of the most attractive features of Clover is its pricing model. Karl McCann, Senior Product Manager explains:

"We very much wanted to offer a simple pricing structure, one price to cover all licenses, support, warranty, secure cloud database and web dashboard. Our customers can even opt to avail of Clover without any upfront fee on our 36-month package."

AIB Merchant Services are offering HAI Members an exclusive offer on merchant services and Clover. Find out more in the Members' Area of hardwareassociation.ie



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MEETING CLIENT'S NEEDS

Integrity Software is based in Ireland and the UK and specialises in providing business management software to builders providers and hardware stores. Its software is developed and supported by a team of over 50 skilled and experienced professionals.

Integrity says that it provides a complete solution to meet client's needs including; software, hardware, training, support and implementation. Integrity's Trader software, specifically designed around the requirements of a builder's provider, "combines powerful accounting functionality with sales and stock management to create a complete business management system." Trader is designed to allow customers to implement



Integrity's Trader software is specifically designed around the requirements of a builder's provider.

best-practice processes for their businesses, from order processing and inventory management, to price and margin control, according to Integrity. Customer and supplier financial control are also key reasons why clients choose to implement Integrity's system, the company states, whatever the size and scale of their business operations.

Paul Corbet, Account Manager

at Integrity Software comments: "Trader provides all the features and functionality you would need to control your business. In addition, we are very excited about recent enhancements and future plans for the Trader system." Recent enhancements include greater use of wireless technology, signature data capture and emailing and marketing modules.

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CLOUD-HOSTED SOLUTIONS

Merchant is a versatile business management solution for traders, distributors and retailers.

Available as both an on-premises and in-cloud solution, it seamlessly integrates sales, stock management, accounting and reporting processes in one easy-to-use package, according to RNH.

A spokesperson for RNH comments: "Our hosted cloud solutions allow you to simplify your IT and achieve tangible

cost savings. Rather than buying and installing software upfront, our hosted solutions allow you to rent our business management systems on a flexible per-user basis. Instead of purchasing and maintaining expensive servers on your own premises, your local system connects to a state-of-the-art data centre by means of a robust, enterprise-grade network. And because all the processing is done off-site using powerful virtual servers, you could even continue to use your existing workstation hardware."

SalesRep is a feature-rich tablet app that empowers field-based sales representatives to strengthen customer relationships and improve productivity, according to RNH Solutions. The spokesperson explains: "It communicates directly with your RNH business management solution via WiFi or 3G, enabling your staff to access account information, customer notes and transaction history.

They can check pricing, view stock availability and raise orders directly from the app. "It also allows your staff to conduct consignment or managed stock checks and create replenishment orders. Details of visits and calls can be logged on the app and synced instantly with your branch or head office."

In addition, RNH says you can improve stock flow and inventory management in warehouses of all sizes with RNH's Warehouse Management Software (WMS). The system manages all warehouse activities, from goods receipt to picking and shipment, optimising processes and maintaining accurate, up-to-date stock records. The spokesperson continues: "Integrated fully with the Merchant business management systems, WMS seamlessly updates your records and optimises the flow of goods through your warehouse.

The system simplifies the management of all warehouse activities, from goods receipt and putaway to picking, packing and shipment. A hand-held PDA and scanner is used for all data input, continuously updating your central software system via a wireless connection. A user-friendly dashboard provides up-to-the-minute status and audit reports."

Say hello to Clover™ the future of retail.



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CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONALITY

Herbst Software is a next generation enterprise resource planning (ERP) software provider, operating for over 25 years and offering "all the software components your distribution business needs to operate efficiently and effectively". Herbst says its software components empower management with the tools to facilitate staff with functionality that simplifies their activities while catching real-time information for total management control. A spokesperson explains: "We offer comprehensive customer-management functionality for account managers including marketing, correspondence, special prices, credit control, margins, opportunities, and much more. Available modules specifically used within the hardware industry include a customer web portal, handhelds for drivers, sales smartphone app, point of sale and traceability. "Simplify stock control and administration by having one integrated solution which catches information in real-time, thereby stopping paper chasing and preventing duplication.

"You have the ability to empower office workers with instant access to relevant details, with specialised tools that can facilitate the simplification, and often the automation of certain procedures and processes. All of this includes real-time management accounting and reporting at the press of a button, with drill-down to the original documents." Herbst says its software enables the use of all available resources at full capacity.

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GREATER CONTROL

Intact Software has been providing ePOS and business management software to hardware stores and builders merchants across Ireland for over 23 years. Intact Software says almost 200 builders' merchants in Ireland use its software to run their businesses. Its client list comprises some high-profile groups and independent retailers including members of the Topline, National Hardware, Expert and Associated Hardware groups.

The company's recent move to new state-of-the-art premises is to facilitate its extensive growth plans. This expansion has been driven principally by sales of their latest accounting and business management software, Intact iQ, both domestically and internationally and marks the continued evolution of the company. A spokesperson for Intact comments: "Designed and developed in Dundalk, Intact brings a range of advanced functionality to business owners giving them much greater control of their business, driven by the latest technology. Intact boasts specialised features for handling the many different product types found in stores – timber, tiles, bathrooms, lead, kits, split packs, multi-packs etc. From a customer-facing perspective, Intact offers a range of features designed to guarantee a high level of customer service while ensuring needs are met in terms of margin control, upselling etc."

An advertisement for Intact Software. The top left features the Intact logo with a stylized 'i' icon and the text 'intact ePOS & Business Management Software'. To the right is a blue triangle containing the text 'Record Measure Control'. Below the logo is a vertical list of industry sectors: DIY Stores, Merchants, Agri Supplies, Garden Centres, Co-ops, Hardware Stores, Homestyle Stores, Builders Providers, and & Supply Chain. To the right of this list is a photograph of two men in a hardware store, one in a blue jacket and the other in a dark sweater, looking at a computer screen. At the bottom left is a blue triangle with the contact information: a phone number (+353 42 9331742) and an email address (info@intactsoftware.ie). At the bottom right is a yellow triangle with the website address (www.intactsoftware.ie). The bottom of the ad features the text '100% Developed and Supported in Ireland'.

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