

The industry at its best

Andrew Scott, founder and CEO of the Glazing Summit, reflects on the event's return to Edgbaston Cricket Ground

To some, glass and glazing is just a job – a place to work. But to me, it's a passion.

I've given decades of my life to UK fenestration, first as a fabricator, then as a marketing strategist and business consultant – and between now and the day I retire, I'll be doing everything in my power to help drive this sector forward.

It was that passion that, back in 2018, led me to found the first ever Glazing Summit.

The idea was simple – fenestration faced big challenges and even bigger opportunities. By gathering the sector's key decision makers in one place once a year, we could pool our talents and resources, overcome those challenges, and take full advantage of those opportunities for the benefit of everyone in our industry.

Back then, the big talking points were skills shortages, automation, regulation, sustainability, and the then still-looming prospect of Brexit. But we had no idea what was around the corner.

Tumultuous times

Just a few years later, we were hit by the worst public health crisis in a generation, which shut down virtually the whole sector for the best part of a quarter.

Then, following the relaxation of the first lockdown measures, consumer demand came roaring back, resulting in one of the biggest home improvement booms in living memory.

With that came incredible success for thousands of UK window businesses – but before long, that success was complicated by severe supply chain disruption, shortages of even the most basic components and materials, spiralling prices and a Brexit-exacerbated skills crisis.

And for me, one of the most frustrating things of all was that we couldn't get together and talk about it. If ever there was a time for a Glazing Summit, that was it – but social distancing measures made that impossible.

Back together

Now we've finally been able to meet – and it was definitely worth the wait.

We welcomed over 400 of the window industry's most influential people to Edgbaston Cricket Ground for a day of insight, debate and discussion.

We were fortunate to benefit from the expertise of respected people from across multiple fields. From the GGF, we heard from David Borland, senior technical officer at Arbutnot Latham, who shared insights on the ever-changing regulatory minefield.

Bloomberg correspondent and chief investment officer Greg Perdon was listed by Citywire as one of the top 100 most influential wealth managers in Britain. He gave a presentation comparing Britain's economic outlook to that of other major economies. Crucially, he foresaw a

promising 2022 for UK home improvements.

Throughout the day, panel debates also tackled the industry's biggest issues, compered by Chris Champion and Paul Godwin.

With COP26 looming, attendees addressed climate change –



Andrew Scott

questioning whether end-users really care about the environment, and whether the industry's much talked-about commitment to sustainability is actually just a box-ticking exercise.

Installers debated the soaring cost of materials, and whether the drastic price rises they've received are really justified given the poor quality and service many continue to experience.

Another topic was the supply chain crisis, the changing dynamic between customers and suppliers, and when the industry will return to pre-pandemic levels.

And a panel of experts discussed the growing number of mergers and acquisitions in fenestration, predicting further consolidation in the months and years ahead as a result of Brexit, changes to consumer demand, and the continuing fallout of COVID-19.

No substitute for face-to-face

But aside from the content on the stage, one of the most gratifying parts of the day for me was simply watching attendees talking to one another – some meeting for the first time, others reconnecting after years.

Zoom has its place, and I suspect it will be part of our lives for some time to come but what the Summit confirmed for me was that there's no substitute for face to face.

Our industry is at its best when it gets together, engages in lively discussion and debate, and works to overcome the obstacles ahead of us.

I left Edgbaston more energised and inspired than ever and convinced that the sector's passion and entrepreneurial spirit will see us through whatever the future throws at us. I can't wait for next year. □

For more information on partnering with the Glazing Summit next year, visit www.glazingsummit.co.uk