

Easy come easy go

For the window and door industry, rising energy prices create a heady mix of challenge and opportunity writes **Darren Woodcock**, general manager at Deceuninck

In common with all manufacturing businesses, the window industry is energy intensive, glass particularly, but also aluminium and PVC-U.

Rising energy costs increase manufacturing costs. This is at a time when the industry is already facing increases in employment costs and overheads. It cranks up the pressure that little bit further and fabricators and the industry at large will feel it.

The flip side of that is that homeowners are also facing financial pressures and may be more receptive to an energy-efficiency sell.

It's not an easy landscape to navigate but there are, as always, opportunities, but you need the right message and the right product.

The UK remains heavily reliant on gas compared with many European countries. It produces around 45% of the gas it consumes and imports the remainder. Even relatively small disruptions in global supply therefore have the potential to influence prices.

For households, the immediate impact of wholesale price movements is moderated by Ofgem's energy price cap, which limits what suppliers can charge customers on standard variable tariffs.

The current cap for the period from April to June equates to an annual energy bill of £1,641 for the average dual-fuel household.

However, wholesale price movements take time to feed through into the cap. If higher wholesale costs persist, the cap could rise to as much as £2,500 a year for the average household later in the year, according to industry estimates.

That kind of volatility creates uncertainty for homeowners. People remember how quickly energy costs increased in recent years. When prices begin to move again, it tends to focus minds on the long-term efficiency of their homes.

The sting in the tail, however, is that the same drivers which encourage homeowners to place

more importance on energy efficiency, may also prevent them from spending.

The Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply has warned that the cost of everyday consumer goods could also rise significantly during 2026.

This has an inevitable knock-on on consumer confidence. If people are paying more for energy, transport and everyday goods, it can make them think twice about larger purchases. That makes finance more important. If we can help people mitigate the impact of rising fuel bills now, while supporting them with a mechanism to fund it, it removes a barrier to purchase.

How the conflict affects the housing market is important. Analysts suggest that the expected changes in interest rates and mortgage costs, combined with lower levels of consumer confidence, are likely to slow the housing market.

Swap rates, which influence the rates lenders offer to borrowers, have already begun to edge upwards following the recent geopolitical developments. They have increased by around 0.2% points since the conflict began. Even small changes in mortgage costs can have an impact on buyer behaviour.

If borrowing becomes more expensive, it can slow down transactions or encourage homeowners to delay moving.

We know that there is a direct correlation between activity in the housing market and demand for replacement products.

While those factors strengthen the case for investment in energy efficiency periods of high energy costs have historically encouraged homeowners to look more closely at how their homes perform according to research commissioned by Deceuninck.

Windows and doors ranked among the most popular upgrades. Energy



Darren Woodcock

efficient windows and doors are one of the most tangible energy efficiency improvements homeowners can make.

For installers, turning that awareness into sales means helping homeowners understand the real-world impact of upgrading older windows and doors.

Deceuninck supports that conversation through its energy calculator which demonstrates how replacing older windows can reduce household energy consumption and heating costs.

Depending on the starting point, those savings can be substantial. Previous modelling shows that replacing older windows with modern high-performance systems can significantly reduce household energy use and carbon emissions over time.

While energy prices may fluctuate, the broader shift in homeowner attitudes towards energy efficiency is likely to remain.

The key is making sure the message is communicated clearly. If sales staff can demonstrate how new windows and doors contribute then the industry is very well positioned to be part of the solution. □

www.deceuninck.co.uk

U-calc moving on

While notional u-values were held at 1.2w/m²K for new build windows as outlined in approved document L the revision introduces a move away from the standard model of calculation writes Kevin Jones, head of technical at the Glass and Glazing Federation



The new regulation introduces a specific assessment of each individual window supplied. This is something which could force developers to move to triple-glazed specifications to achieve compliance. It means that the age of the 'standard calculation window' is effectively over for new build.

Under the home energy model, every window has to be calculated to its actual size and configuration to arrive at an area weighted average. That includes all the items that sit within the opening. That's a huge change in mindset and methodology for both housebuilders and their window and door suppliers.

It comes as the government attempts to close a gap in performance between theoretical building product performance and what is delivered in real-life applications.

At the heart of the change is the move away from SAP to the new home energy model (HEM).

This means modelling each specific window configuration. That creates a challenge because most windows supplied are smaller than the 'standard' window configuration (1230x1480 open/fixed) used to model u-values.

The smaller the glazed area, the harder it is to achieve a u-value of 1.2 W/m²K, especially where windows feature transoms, mullions, dummy sashes, astragal and Georgian bars, add-on cills, head vents and other components.

The government has been very clear that the model of the home needs to reflect what is actually built.

That means everything in the window opening that affects thermal performance has to be taken into account. Up to now, most calculations have been based on relatively simple, clean configurations. Under the new regime, the real-world complexity of modern window designs is brought into the calculation.

On a big, simple window with a high glass-to-frame ratio, you can often achieve compliance with a well-specified double glazed unit. But when you start adding dummy sashes, transoms, Georgian bars and so on, particularly in smaller apertures, you're making life much more challenging in thermal terms.

However, structural elements of the window which can negatively impact thermal performance, for example steel



Kevin Jones

reinforcements and bay couplers, do not need to be included in the HEM calculation.

The shift also puts software and systems houses in a race against time to create and integrate u-value configurators into their manufacturing processes before the end of the transition period.

The GGF is currently seeking clarification on how long the industry has to implement the changes.

The approved document states that changes 'take effect on 24th March 2027 for use in England for building work that is not in connection with higher-risk building work' and '24 September 2027 for use in England for building work that is in connection with higher-risk building work'. This would, however, mark a departure from previous – and longer – transitional arrangements.

For now, at least, for domestic replacement, the current regime, including the use of standard sizes and styles for U-value declarations, essentially remains unchanged; however an extension into window and door replacement, is the logical next step. Everything we are seeing points to this being a staging post, not the final destination.

The Future Homes Standard doesn't just tweak the numbers – it changes the rules of the game for new build window and door specification.

Those who move early, understand the detail and invest in the right tools and relationships will be in a strong position.

Those who wait until 2027 and hope for the best are likely to face difficult conversations, disrupted projects and squeezed margins. Now is the time for the trade to get on the front foot. □

www.ggf.org.uk

Hands-on business

A recent webinar hosted by Andrew Scott has prompted a whole new business journey for one of the event's attendees



(Left to right): Andrew Scott, MD of Purplex and Ducan Wright, MD of Lindenwood Home (UK)

Duncan Wright, managing director of London-based Lindenwood Home (UK) and Timber Windows, got more than he bargained for after listening to Andrew Scott, CEO of Purplex Marketing.

Wright says: “I joined January’s webinar, looking forward to the advice and strategies Andrew would share with the industry. He didn’t disappoint – Andrew knows his stuff and not only gave us all some fantastic ideas and strategies, but it also really inspired me. To be honest, any time with Andrew is incredibly inspiring, whether he’s delivering a session to a group or speaking to you on a one-to-one basis.”

Wright took advantage of the two-hour strategy session that Scott had offered to five business leaders that attended the webinar.

“When Andrew offered this session

at the end of the webinar I jumped at it – who wouldn’t” Wright says. “And true to his word, we met for more than two hours and went through my business top to bottom – sales, marketing, business operations and finance. We even discussed business fundamentals and the importance of getting those right.

“One thing that really stood out to me, from our conversation, was Andrew’s experience in acquisitions. This is part of my own mindset but talking to someone, like Andrew, who’s been there and done it many times was incredibly valuable and I really appreciated his thoughts and guidance on the acquisition process.”

Scott says: “The glass and glazing industry has faced some challenging times but there is still plenty of opportunities for growth, regardless of economic uncertainty or market conditions, and I’ve spent the last 20

years helping businesses capitalise on those opportunities.”

Following the success of the January webinar, Scott a second session on in February. In this one-hour session he gave an overview of the industry, highlighted where the opportunities are and provided the key strategies every business needs to adopt to buck the trend and create sustainable growth. □

www.purplexmarketing.com/

Let's talk money

With installers and stockists at the sharp end of the market facing squeezed margins and persistently sluggish retail demand, it's no surprise that most conversations between fabricators and trade customers at the moment still start with price writes Martin Nettleton, managing director at Euroglaze

I've been in trade fabrication for enough years to know that price will always matter. In fact, I've spent 20+ years building Euroglaze into one of the most efficient, lean manufacturing environments in the industry so that we can always be amongst the most competitive on price as well as on lead times. But I still don't believe that the price you pay for a window or door dictates the profit you make on a job. It's the total amount of time you spend on that job that is by far the biggest factor.

Installers don't lose profit on a job because their window is a few pounds more expensive per frame; they lose profit if a unit is manufactured to the wrong size, it arrives scratched or damaged, a delivery is incomplete, or they have to spend 40 minutes on the phone to their supplier trying to resolve a problem.

All these kinds of errors waste time that could be spent on site and often even trigger a return visit. And calculating how much that time and revisit is actually worth to an installation business is key to understanding just how much profit is being lost.

If you take a two man fitting team on £250 each per day for example, every half day wasted costs the business a minimum of £250 between them. Just a couple of wasted half days per month adds up to at least £6,000 a year. And the cost isn't just the labour – it is the extra admin time, additional fuel and travel time and disruption to the rest of the week's schedule, not to mention the knock-on effects of rebooked customers, postponements for other trades and reputational damage.

Those wasted hours aren't just an inconvenience, they represent real margin erosion.

As I see it, fabricators who aren't focused on zero manufacturing errors, zero quality rejections and zero incomplete deliveries can effectively be costing their customers money.



Martin Nettleton

At Euroglaze, our commitment to lean manufacturing and a 'quality circles' philosophy embedded right across the business ensures that lead times are as short as three days on some products and there are close to zero QC rejections in our factory.

As a long-established trade fabricator of Rehau and Liniar frames with capacity for 800 frames per week at our factory in Barnsley, our competitive advantage comes from the fact that we offer our customers what is probably the ultimate in predictability. Our stockists and installers know that orders from Euroglaze will arrive in full and on time (our 2026 OTIF for white PVC-

U frames is 100% on a 3-day lead time), they won't have to worry about errors, and our customer service team will respond quickly via a phone call, WhatsApp, email or even video to resolve any issues. When new customers come on board with us, we get lots of feedback on how quick and easy we are to deal with.

When they buy from us they are buying confidence that we will deliver what we promise and, crucially, won't waste any of their valuable time. □

<https://www.euroglaze.co.uk/>