

Part F – Cowboys & Compromises

Part F, writes Sternfenster's Mike Parczuk contradicts Part L. Those who wrote the building regulations were disjointed and disconnected from reality. We all know that.

We also know that reputable firms will insist on selling windows with trickle vents whilst the cowboys will get round the regs – and sell their windows cheaper.

We have customers who are genuinely concerned that they will lose business. Everyone knows those companies just down the road who don't care about building regulations, the ones who will say that Part F doesn't apply or get the homeowner to sign a waiver – something we know isn't worth the paper that it's written on. It's

going to happen. You know it. I know it.

What frustrates me is the issue of enforcement. Because how can Part F be enforced? We've been asked if we will do unrouted, 'stick on trickle vents'. Presumably because the intention is that they can be removed after inspection?

How will competent persons schemes, FENSA and Certass, really know? Even if an installer fails an installation, it's then down to the building control inspectorate to pursue that company – and inspectors are pretty thin on the ground.

No – the reality is that if you are a decent business, that plays by the rules, you will lose business in the next 12-months to companies that don't.



So, what can you do?

You can and you should, report those companies that don't install to the regulations. It's not about telling tales, it's about driving up standards throughout our industry, something we should be doing.

And we can educate the homeowner. We can communicate the benefits and emphasise the importance of effective ventilation – even if it is a little bit ugly and increases your costs! [i](#)

Raising Fire Door Awareness Is Vital

The business Manager of Shelforce says news from the Fire Door Inspection Scheme that three quarters of the fire doors inspected in the UK did not meet standards should be a much heeded warning.

Howard Trotter says there has been a wake-up call on fire safety for both the fenestration industry and wider construction industry and society generally but the FDIS' data, based on more than 100,000 fire door inspections carried out by its approved inspectors in 2021, means there are a vast amount of buildings and vulnerable residents living in danger.

FDIS revealed that the most common reasons for failure was due to improper installation,



including excessive gaps between the door and the frame, care and maintenance issues and issues over smoke sealing.

"A greater understanding of fire doors and their components, including testing and certification, regulations and standards, inspection, and maintenance is needed," Trotter told The Installer.

"It's crucial that trained fire door installers are used and reputable and trained fire door inspectors conduct fire door inspections. We are a reputable manufacturer of fire doors at Shelforce but that is to no avail if the installation, maintenance, and repair simply isn't up to scratch. People are going to die.

"Product manufacture, quality, installation and maintenance are all life critical. After all, everyone plays their part in ensuring a fire door performs as it should and saves lives." [i](#)

Mental Health Stats – Startling, Disturbing And Emotional

The results of The Double Glazing & Conservatory Ombudsman Scheme's Fenestration Industry Mental Health survey are in. They are startling, disturbing and emotional.

They cast light on an issue that has been proven to be starker than anyone could have anticipated.

The survey shows the price we're paying in terms of mental health as a sector: 89.5% of respondents have seen an increase in their workload since the pandemic; 76.3% are experiencing burnout from their workload; 86.8% believe there isn't enough awareness about mental health; and sadly, 60.5% believe there is a mental health crisis in the glazing industry.

Chief Executive of DGCOS, Faisal Hussain, says: "When we first set about conducting this survey, we were driven by a subjective and anecdotal belief that people were struggling with mental health but just not really talking about it. We wanted to understand the thoughts and experiences of those working in the sector. However, the scale of



what we've uncovered, is objective proof of how serious and widespread the challenges are.

"The sample of respondents was representative of age, gender and job functions. Almost half of those questioned say they have felt 'very stressed' over the last two years, with more than one in three feeling 'very anxious'. There was a variety of reasons behind the mental health struggles with the top three being 'too much work', 'staff shortages' and 'consumer complaints'. Interestingly, Covid-19 ranked in the fourth place. What is even more concerning however, is that

despite the widespread scale of the problems, half of all respondents reported that they have never confided in friends or work colleagues.

"There were some positives to come out of the survey, in that just under one in two respondents said their employer was very supportive.

"We hope the results provide valuable insights which will help the industry collectively to put together some form of collaborative support mechanisms and I'd be interested in hearing from anyone who would like to progress this with me." [i](#)

Maintaining Tilt & Turn From Ukraine

Mila has made clear its ongoing support for Axor, its tilt and turn hardware partner based in Ukraine.

Axor is located in the eastern city of Dnipro, which was the target of Russian attacks early on in the conflict. However, with the Ukrainian government urging businesses there to stay open as much as possible to help support the ravaged econ-

omy, Axor has largely been able to maintain production at its extensive factory.

Richard Gyde, Mila's MD, says: "We offered our unconditional support to the people in Dnipro from the outset.

"In line with that, we have been continuing to place orders and have facilitated new shipping and delivery routes via a massively expanded ware-

house Axor has set up in Poland.

"We knew that fabricators would support us and while we have made it clear to them that we have contingency plans in place to offer alternative tilt and turn hardware if supply is disrupted in the long term, all our customers buying Axor products have welcomed our approach." [i](#)

GGF – Still The Voice Of Reason In A Complex Legislative World

The Glass & Glazing Federation has proved its influence via the late but crucial amendment to Approved Document L of the new Building Regulations.

Specifically, this was how U-values are to be calculated for non-standard doors, in particular bi-folding and sliding types.

The impact of this change is considerable, especially when considering the continuing popularity of such products amongst home improving householders. And this significant success came through interaction between GGF members, the Federation's Technical officers and effective relationships with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

A number of members contacted the GGF's technical team who, in consultation with members of the GGF Systems House and Aluminium Groups, examined the method for calculating U-values for glazed bi-folds and patio doors. They found that it would be impossible for some larger multi-pane doors to comply with the uplifted regulations, because of the proposed conflicting formula.

Conflict

"It would have been impossible for some larger multi-pane doors to comply," explains Kevin Jones, Technical Officer for the GGF. "The conflict came from the requirement to make calculations at the smaller standard size, as the glass to frame ratio would have been far from what was

actually installed – thereby not accurately reflecting energy in use. In some cases, it would have been impossible to calculate a figure."

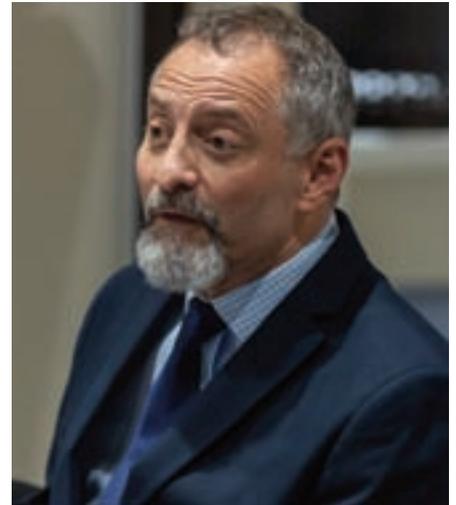
Channels to government

The anomaly was communicated through well-developed channels established between the GGF and DLUHC, with this key line of communication managed on behalf of the GGF by Chris Beedel (pictured), Head of Government Advocacy & Stakeholder Relations. He says: "Irrespective of which party is in power, the civil servants that run the country on a day-to-day basis are hard-working and well-informed individuals.

"They depend heavily on input from industry representatives who themselves are expected to act as accurate and dynamic communications channels. The information has to be unequivocal and provably accurate to be embodied into legislation. That is what we were able to achieve and with remarkable speed on this occasion."

Trusted experts

Beedel adds: "It was an excellent example of how the GGF and its members work in unison to achieve change that benefits the whole industry. Whilst we have an excellent technical department, more specialised input from our members gives us a superb technical knowledge and the government relies heavily upon organisations like ours to advise them."



Elephant

Beedel is less than complimentary when it comes to another change to the Building Regulations. He opines: "The elephant in the room however, is the introduction of revised Approved Document F, which will result in most new and replaced windows being fitted with trickle vents, a move that GGF and others believe negates the positives provided under Document L.

"We and a number of other industry bodies made repeated attempts to convince the government of the approach to Doc F but the department has insisted that this it remains unchanged and will become statutory on 15 June 2022. In our experience before and since, this is unusual – but the department insists that its research is sound.

"We will continue to make representations to the department on this issue but the advice that we must now give is that the revisions contained in Approved Document F must be adopted and adhered to." 