

Chairman's Introduction

In stepping into David White's shoes as Chairman of the FTMRC, I can't help but reflect on his words in last year's Directory "so far, so good, but we have a long way to go".

This remains very true, but at least under David's leadership we have laid firm foundations and I look upon it as now being my job, supported by the FTMRC Council, to build upon these foundations as we continue to progress within the roofing sector of UK construction.

We are certainly now recognised as an organisation which has the central aim of developing the quality standards in design and installation of traditional metal roofing, in a market place which is continuing to expand in the UK, despite the economic difficulties that most business are experiencing.

We have already established a firm base of expert contractors, supported by a wide range of leading metal manufacturers and suppliers who have identified with the FTMRC objectives and joined our cause as Associate Members.

There is no doubt that the current financial state of the economy has affected the industry in different ways to the "normal" recessions experienced in the past, with major contracts being put on hold or cancelled as investors become increasingly nervous. Demands are being made on contractors to reduce prices by large percentages under threat of awarded contracts being reduced, or even withdrawn.

Nevertheless smaller projects seem to be continuing and traditional metal roofing is becoming a feature which is increasingly popular with designers and specifiers.

Regardless of the size of project however, it is in such difficult times where the bottom line comes increasingly under the microscope and cost-reduction pressures increase all the way down the supply chain. The danger is that cutting costs may lead to cutting corners, both in the quality of materials specified and in the design/installation of the roof detail. It is here that I feel we should be leading our industry in the comprehensive promotion of quality standards – in materials, in design and in workmanship.

Our leading metal manufacturers across Europe take pride in the quality of the product they produce, made to perform and made to last, with a long term performance far in excess of that which can be achieved by short term substitutes in their various plasticised guises, whose only tenuous foothold in the marketplace has been gained through price.

However, any short term price advantage surely pales into insignificance when compared to long term value for money, with an aluminium, copper, steel or zinc roof lasting ten times as long as their poor relation impersonators.

Equally, informed design and specification is essential and here there is a wealth of expertise available to the architect, through the manufacturer, through the supplier and through the contractor. We have even established a technical support group through the Federation, which has been created to help with technical design or installation queries.

Quality of installation is something which the FTMRC takes as its own responsibility. The work of our established members continues to be vetted regularly and prospective members cannot hope to join the Federation unless they can demonstrate their work meets the required standard (regardless of how much money they have in the bank!).

We are taking responsibility not only for today's workmanship quality but also tomorrow's and in this respect are working with various Associate Member manufacturers to provide training courses at the LSA's metal roof training centre at East Peckham in Kent. Several zinc courses have already been run there on our behalf by VM Zinc and there are already plans for copper courses to start during 2010, supported by KME. There is further editorial about training development later in the Directory.

Towards the end of 2009 we were invited to join the BSI Technical Standards Committee and we hope to be working closely with them in order to develop the Codes of Practice for traditional metal roofing, which we hope will ultimately be based upon our own Guide to Good Practice.

The Guide to Good Practice itself is currently under review and will be re-issued during 2010, having been updated and expanded in order to give our members a quality technical reference base to work from.

So yes, there is certainly a long way to go, however we remain utterly determined to achieve our objectives. It is my purpose as Chairman, supported by the Council, to ensure that the FTMRC does not slacken in its drive to provide the focal point to increase the technical ability, knowledge and awareness of our membership, to promote at every opportunity quality standards in all aspects of our sector of the UK construction industry and continually work towards the appreciation and acceptance of long term performance and value for money over short term, corner-cutting, cut price expediency