



QUALITY BY ASSOCIATION

Improvement

CFA comment



The chief executive officer: Richard Catt

# M&S exclusively specifies CFA contractor members

WE live in a time of enormous change. Some say the rate of change and degree of technical innovation we are experiencing can be compared to the industrial revolution in terms of pace and impact. There are examples of innovation and 'step' change all around us. For example, many significant advances in the home have happened in my lifetime. Without wishing to sound ancient, I bought records as a child and remember as a teenager when CDs were launched.

I also remember the cost of the first CD players and video recorders. Was it the Ferguson Video Star that was a top loader and had a wired remote control? Ejecting a video looked and sounded like a major feat of engineering, but it was impressive. That's unless you went the Betamax route, but that's another story.

In business, improvements in communication have made a major impact. With fax machines, the PC, mobile phones, email and the internet all marking major steps forward. A few may suggest that these are not advanced and I sometimes sympathise when they don't seem to work.

For the flooring industry, it's easy to identify technical changes that have taken us forward. The innovations with adhesives, damp proof membranes and the manufacture of resilient products have all made their mark, as did the advent of fast track programmes and the materials and techniques to support them.

Gone are the days of stores shutting for a couple of weeks during a complete refurbishment. But of course, fast track in the flooring world has its own challenges and many of these are regularly documented in this journal.

A common theme with innovation is companies and individuals with vision and determination to make change. Challenge the established system and break the mould. I firmly believe that Marks & Spencer and the team headed by Paul Glinn (head of architecture property & store development) and Matt Edgell (construction standards manager property & store development) have these qualities and are heading up a project that could herald a new approach to the installation of floorcoverings in a retail environment in the UK.

Paul and Matt approached the CFA last year and explained that they were working on a project called the Marks & Spencer Flooring Improvement Programme. Essentially, it is aimed at improving the whole process of the installation of flooring in their stores and therefore ultimately reducing failures, which are costly to their business.

The project is far reaching in its scope and before agreeing to assist on behalf of the CFA and our members, I made certain that factors under the control of main contractors such as, programming of trades, site conditions, availability of suitable areas to fit, acclimatisation of products, shop fitting on to newly installed floors, etc were all included in the



review. Paul and Matt have demonstrated that commitment.

There were two main outcomes from these early discussions. Firstly, M&S has decided to only specify CFA flooring contractor members to work on its sites from 2010 onwards. Interestingly, all the subfloor manufacturers involved were already CFA members, as were most of the floorcovering manufacturers and particularly those who supply the main areas. The support and profile I presented relating to CFA members and membership benefits, clearly made a very positive impression.

Secondly, M&S asked FITA to conduct an independent assessment of the fitters who will work at its sites. They asked FITA to develop short courses to ensure installers have a common and consistent approach, but can also demonstrate the skills required against an assessment carried out at our training centre in Loughborough.

I'll tell you more about this process in another article, but as I write, we're more than half way through the first phase of courses and have assessed approximately 43 fitters so far.

So, what do the contractors and manufactures think to the M&S flooring Improvement Programme?

CFA member Martin Delbosq of Delmar Flooring, says:

'At last somebody has seen the importance that training, programming, the correct products, preparation and installation has on a quality floor.....'

Geoff Lewin of Tarkett: 'We are pleased to be a partner supporting the Marks & Spencer Flooring Programme in conjunction with the CFA. We view this incentive as being a creative advance to develop a more coherent and consistent approach to achieving high quality installations.'

I don't pretend it will change things overnight, but as a model for how clients may want their refurbishments and flooring projects managed in the future, I think it one that many will follow.

Why do I think it is different to other initiatives in the past? It's driven by the client, who sees the opportunity to address direct and hidden costs as well as getting value for money from its investment in flooring.

This initiative already has the 'buy-in' of many of the key commercial players, plus of course it also has the backing of the leading trade association and its members.

If you have any queries or would like to receive a full information pack on CFA membership, please contact the CFA office.

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**CFA president: John Alcock**

# There may be a bumpy road ahead

I WAS present at a Construction Products Association (CPA) meeting in London recently, attended by representatives from the major sectors of construction as well as by the Conservative shadow housing minister Grant Shapps MP.

Politics aside, it was a useful meeting and the agenda included Conservative policies on housing and wider construction should they be elected at the general election.

I can only summarise what was discussed as it involved a free exchange of information, but the key point, should the Conservatives get elected is that they will not be a NIMBY (not in my back yard) government.

They want to see built 240,000 new homes a year as well as making planning easier, but the point that stood out was their commitment to make housing development 'demand-driven.'

'Who creates the demand?' was my question. 'Will it be the people, the councils, the developer or the builder?' There was no clear answer on this, but it did emerge that if elected the Conservatives will allow councils to keep the money from any council tax payable from

occupiers and will not have to submit it to central government.

At the same time, the government will match the council tax money pound-for-pound for a period of six years, with a 125% incentive for affordable housing. This money, generated from new-build can then be used to support local council-led projects and will hopefully incentivise the councils to allow more homes to be built.

Additionally, if elected, the Conservatives will allow the establishment of local housing trusts with the freedom to develop new homes for local people.

This is sort of how they hope

the demand will be generated I guess, but how this relates to flooring is probably more indirect.

Although on a general level any initiative that leads to new construction projects has to be welcomed with cautious optimism.

However, as one hand gives so too another takes away, and all these initiatives and incentives will ultimately have to be paid for and we all know from where? Yes – TAX!

This is the problem with any initiative to get construction moving, whether commercial or domestic. It has to be paid for from somewhere and with something.

Given the current economic climate, and the level of government debt there will have to be almost cross-party unity to limit the amount of spend on public sector projects, regardless of who is in power.

In hard terms this means spending on schools and hospitals will have to take a hit. And as this is typically where most contract work is done, there'll be a bumpy ride ahead.

It has been said that the best way to beat a recession is to build our way out, but let's hope the dual hit of expected higher taxation and reduced public spend doesn't drive the flooring industry out of business!



**Contract Flooring Association members at the National Specialist Contractors' Council annual lunch last December. From the left, Keith Carey, former CFA president; Richard Catt, CFA ceo; Helen Tidmarsh, CFA office manager; Hamish MacGregor, NSCC president and former CFA president; Mary Sillitoe, former CFA council member and Jo Singer, of Hillside Contracts; John Butler and Tony Mathe, both CFA council members**



## Basic carpet fitting

(5 days) Mar 1; Apr 19; Jun 7;

## Intermediate carpet fitting

(4 days) Mar 8; Apr 26;

## Advanced carpet fitting

(4 days) Mar 29;

## Essential wood fitting

(3 days) Mar 24; May 12; June 30;

## Intermediate wood fitting

(3 days) Feb 15; Apr 7; May 24;

## Solid wood sanding & finishing

(2 days) Mar 18; May 6; Jun 24;

## Laminate & floating wood

(2 days) Mar 22; May 10;

## Domestic vinyl fitting

(2 days) Mar 3; Apr 21; Jun 9;

## Safety & smooth vinyl (commercial) fitting

(4 days) Feb 22, Apr 12; Jun 1; Courses also in Manchester on Mar 15; May 4; Jun 21;

## Luxury vinyl tile fitting

(4 days) Feb 8; May 17;

## Estimating and planning

(2 days) Apr 19; Jun 7;

## Damp testing floors

(1 day) Feb 11; Mar 30; May 18.

## Subfloor preparation

(2 days) Apr 26-27; June 14-15.

All courses are at Loughborough unless otherwise stated. Please enquire about course fees when booking. Check out the FITA website for the latest course information.

**FITA also offers NVQ training via EWPA and OSAT.**

■ T: 0115 950 6836

■ [www.fita.co.uk](http://www.fita.co.uk)

## NVQ COURSES

**Floortrain**  
floortrain (GB)

maintaining standards in flooring installations  
Floortrain (GB) is a registered City & Guilds assessment centre for NVQs in textile, impervious and wood flooring. Full funding is available in 95% of cases. Training packages are offered to intermediate or advanced levels. Contact Dominic for details:

■ T: 01709 780505

### FERFA

Courses include In-situ resin flooring apprenticeship scheme; prepare and profile substrates apprentice scheme; work-based recorders (half-day training session); assistance with obtaining NVQ level 2 In situ resin flooring. ■ T: 01252 714250

### Flooring Assessments

offers on-site assessment for floorcovering City & Guild NVQ at all levels, including CSCS cards and training to up-skill in carpets, impervious and wood flooring:

■ T: 07515885912

■ [dave@flooringassessments.com](mailto:dave@flooringassessments.com)

■ [www.flooringassessments.com](http://www.flooringassessments.com)

### Bostik Flooring Academy

St Helens College offers training in floorcovering NVQ Levels 1, 2 and 3 and construction diplomas for two years on a day release basis, plus On Site Assessment and Training (OSAT) for experienced workers and the Experienced Workers Practical Assessments (EWPA) for CSCS cards.

■ T: 01744 623640

### Scotland Floor Training

Construction skills/SQA approved centre for textile, impervious and wood. We come to you! On site assessments & apprenticeships for SVQs & CSCS. Contact Neillie or Rory:

■ T: 01870 602525

■ [www.floortraining.co.uk](http://www.floortraining.co.uk)

■ E: [rory@floortraining.co.uk](mailto:rory@floortraining.co.uk)

### APPRENTICESHIP COURSES

NVQ floorcoverings (levels 1, 2 & 3) offered at Thomsit Centres & OSAT for experienced workers.

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