

## Editor's comment

# EXPORT SCEPTICS MISS THE BOAT!

**B**RITISH carpet manufacturers have been fond of moaning about the mountains of 'cheap' carpet imported into the UK, much of it from Belgium. This persistent whinge, mostly orchestrated by the Carpet Foundation, has failed to deter High Street retailers from continuing to sell 'budget priced' ranges, which as many Carpetright labels say, are 'made in Europe'.

Last year saw a steep fall in Continental carpet entering the UK, no thanks to any Carpet Foundation promotion, but due to the strength of the Euro along with the devaluation of Sterling against other currencies.

In fact, the weak pound is seen by some economists as a key factor in helping Britain recover from recession. Since the start of the credit crisis in September 2007 the prices of UK goods sold in dollars have fallen by 20% and in Euros by more than 25%, says one estimate – an obvious boon for British exporters.

Government figures out just before Christmas showed a 6% rise in overall exports from the UK in the three months to the end of October. So at last there is a ray of light for British manufacturers. But with a few exceptions, including the likes of James Halstead (Polyflor), the majority of UK floorcovering producers, especially those making carpet, apparently haven't stopped complaining for long enough to think about trying to augment their sales abroad.

It's true that UK trade statistics for carpets and rugs over the last decade show a trend of rising imports and falling exports. But the Belgians, who saw the UK as one of their best markets, were only exploiting their currency exchange

advantage. Now the situation has reversed and there's a great opportunity for us Brits to go smiling and knocking on doors across the channel!

There was an ideal platform six weeks ago at Domotex, the world's biggest flooring exhibition held in Germany. But were there Union Jacks on stands all over the show with enthusiastic salesmen singing the praises of quality woven carpets made in Britain? Not bloody likely!

Over 40,000 people interested in floorcoverings from across the world flock to Domotex annually. However, the number of UK exhibitors has declined year by year. In 2010 the handful of British stands in Germany were massively outnumbered by the Chinese, and even the Americans.

With wars so much in the news recently it's a curious fact that Britain's most successful exporters are in the so-called defence industry. In fact, the UK is allegedly the world's biggest arms exporter in a trade worth billions. The Biblical exhortation is to beat swords into ploughshares. So imagine that as a carpet analogy. For example you'd have artillery into axminsters, bombs into berbers, Trident into tufteds and weapons into wiltons... Well, one can but dream!



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### For starters:

## Here wii go!

After laying flooring at work all day, most fitters want to devote much of their quality time off to 'bonding' with their spouses or partners. So you may think, but it appears that this may not be so.

A nationwide survey of over 1,000 men reveals that most spend on average more time playing on their games consoles (60 hours each month) than

they do with girlfriends, wives or even their mates.

The study, commissioned by a videogame price compare website, found that nearly two thirds of men in the UK own a playstation.

When I was a lad – wii was something you did in the toilet and they used to tell us that playing with your joystick too much could make you go blind.

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