

## Editor's comment

# SHOW IS ALL AT SEA IN BIRMINGHAM

**T**HE organiser of the National Floor Show, UBM, put large billboards outside the Harrogate venue last September announcing that the event was moving to the NEC (hall 2 and 3) in 2010, from June 22-24.

All the exhibitors at Harrogate this year occupied less than 7,000sq m of floor space, yet halls 2 and 3 at the NEC cover 22,000sq m. If UBM believes that it can triple the size of a flooring exhibition one year after a crippling recession, it may be in the wrong business. Strangely, UBM also appears to have ignored the fact that the last time a flooring show was moved from Harrogate to the NEC it was an utter disaster.

Not surprisingly, some irate exhibitors protested about the move to Birmingham, with many claiming they had not even been consulted. UBM rushed out a panicky email just days after the announcement at Harrogate, stating that the 2010 dates were only a 'proposal' and inviting exhibitors to say when they wanted the show. Note: When? But not Where?

Confusion reigned with UBM reportedly even considering holding the National Floor Show alongside its big Interiors event at the NEC in January. But then it suddenly plumped for September – possibly a coincidence, or as some cynics suggest, more likely the result of reports that a significant number exhibitors were urging the show's former organiser, David Wildman, to step in and bring it back to Harrogate.

So UBM opted to go head to head, perhaps hoping to see off Mr Wildman with its substantial cash reserves. Indeed, according to one mischievous allegation, UBM may be offering prominent firms sweeteners to support the NEC show, with stands at below cost or even free! This will not

please those expected to pay the full rate card price.

September is one of the busiest months at the NEC. Most hotel or B&B accommodation within 30 miles of Birmingham will be in very heavy demand and inevitably quite a bit more expensive than Harrogate.

Another major quibble is that the NEC can never hope to achieve the relaxed congenial atmosphere and extensive networking opportunities that you get at Harrogate. Flooring is a small industry and a flooring show would simply be 'lost' in the aircraft-hangar sized halls at the NEC. Harrogate, by comparison – being a more compact venue – can appear to be busy and have a buzz with relatively fewer visitors.

An 'exhibitions war' is not what the flooring industry wants or needs, especially at this awful time with many companies struggling to survive. What the trade deserves is a show in the hands of an organiser who is well regarded and trusted, and who has the real interests of the industry at heart.

I had written this column before David Wildman confirmed that he will organise the Harrogate Flooring Show in 2010, from September 5-7 with a Sunday opening. (see page 12).

Now all we can do is – as they say – to watch this space!



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## For starters: Home owners Trumped

With money, it seems, you can do almost anything. Despite the recession, US billionaire Donald Trump wants to build a £1 billion (yes, billion) golf resort near Aberdeen. The Scottish authorities, obviously delighted by the massive investment, are keenly supporting the bid.

However, several property owners, whose cherished rural homes must be bulldozed to allow the plan to go ahead, are protesting vigorously. Mr Trump, clearly not one to be beaten, is flashing his bank balance and threatening compulsory purchase orders.



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