

CBA

UPDATE
AUTUMN 2005

Supporting The
Concrete Block Industry

— *Latest DTI Statistics*

— *Technical Report*

— *News from the THB*

— *Environmental & Sustainability Performance*

— *Concrete Solutions for a Changing Climate*

— *Annual General Meeting*



CONCRETE BLOCK
ASSOCIATION

www.cba-blocks.org.uk

Chairman's Report



Chris Hudson
Chris Hudson
Chairman

CBA Members Provide Solutions to CDM Regulations

In January this year Gerry Pettit and I met Roger Jamson, HSE Inspector, to discuss his concerns regarding repetitive lifting of heavy products. Roger is one of five inspectors specially instructed to lead developments in product weight reduction – he has been given concrete blocks as his product group. He emphasised that the HSE no longer accepted that blocks over 20kg would be subject to a two-man lift, in practice they found that they were universally placed by individuals. Roger also said that the HSE would be leading a campaign this year to stop the common use of heavy products in repetitive lifting situations.

At the meeting we agreed to conduct a survey of many of our members to determine the proportion of products sold that exceeded 20kg in weight. The answer surprised many of us with the average being 12% of total sales, far higher than we thought. Chief 'culprits' are the 140mm solid dense and the 215mm dense hollow blocks.

There is ample evidence recently that the HSE have targeted the use of heavy blocks in site construction;

a) In Bristol, HSE Inspectors have written to all builders' merchants demanding lists of contractors who have purchased blocks over 20kg in weight since 1 April this year. The letter includes the following statements;

'We are writing to yourselves and other suppliers of concrete blocks in the area, to obtain information about commercial builders using such blocks and therefore of designers specifying them. I therefore am requiring you to send details of all sites (including domestic sites but excluding domestic customers) where you have delivered heavy blocks since 1 April 2005.

This request is made using my powers under section 20 of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. This requires you to provide information requested by an Inspector. Failure to respond may be a criminal offence'.

b) In numerous sites across the country contractors are receiving prohibition notices from the HSE following use of blocks over 20kg at sites.

c) In Kent a beam & block flooring contractor was challenged by an HSE Inspector visiting site. He asked why the contractor was using dense blocks at 19.5kg when lightweight blocks weighed only 16kg and were only slightly more expensive.

This initiative by the HSE provides us with the opportunity to promote recently developed products to our customers – **are YOU making the most of this opportunity?**

DTI Statistics for GB ('000s sq.m)

| | Dense | Lightweight | Aircrete | Total Agg | Total | Aircrete | Aggregate |
|-------------------------|-------|-------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------|-----------|
| 2004 Jan-May | 14869 | 10298 | 13399 | 25167 | 38566 | 34.7% | 65.3% |
| 2004 Full Year | 37444 | 25736 | 31674 | 63180 | 94854 | 33.4% | 66.6% |
| 2005 Jan-May (P) | 15214 | 10870 | 11598 | 26084 | 37682 | 30.8% | 69.2% |
| % Change | 2.3% | 5.6% | -13.4% | 3.6% | -2.3% | | |

(P) Provisional figures for May

Total aggregate concrete block sales for the first five months of 2005 were up 3.6% on the same period last year.

Aircrete block sales were 13.4% down which means that aggregate block sales currently have a 69.2% total market share.

Any News?

If any Member or Associate Member has any news regarding new innovative products, processes, applications or initiatives then why not let me know.

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Technical

Report

Gerry Pettit -
Chairman
Concrete Block
Association -
Technical Committee

Thermal Regulations

It is now clear that implementation of the new Part L for England & Wales will not be until April 2006. This was stated in an answer to an oral Parliamentary question on 11 July 2005. No official statement has been made by ODPM to support this statement. The absence of the Deputy Prime Minister being abroad has been given as the reason for no communication from his office.

The three month delay will give more time for the supporting programmes SAP 2005 for L1 and SBEM for L2 to be finalised by BRE and software houses to prepare their commercial programs based on them.

Changes to section 6 of the Scottish Regulations are said to be in the pipeline and a consultation is due to be launched in the autumn of 2005.

BR 443 U Value Conventions

This document, which gives detailed rules and conventions for U value calculations, is being revised. No provision has been made by ODPM to fund this update, which is needed in support of the changed requirements in the new Part L. Certain sectors of the industry have agreed to fund the work but membership of the steering group is open to all sectors. This is causing friction between those who have contributed and those who have not.



Robust Thermal Details

A similar need exists to update the thermal robust details but ODPM have made no provision to fund this review. It seems that it was expected that Robust Details Ltd (RD Ltd) would take over ownership of these details but they are not minded to do so. They view them as difficult to both 'sell' as they do acoustic RD's and to monitor. RD Ltd are considering setting up RD's for the airtightness of dwellings.

Basements

A consultation has been launched on extensions to the Basement Approved Document. The proposed amendment extends the scope of the AD to plain masonry retaining walls.

Robust Details

A new Robust Detail for solid separating walls is ready for issue but RD Ltd are concerned that 100mm blocks laid flat will be difficult to identify. They want CBA to come up with a system of marking

the tops or bottoms of 100mm dense blocks for easy identification. We have asked RD Ltd if they could get house-builders to identify on their orders when blocks are required for solid wall RD's to save the industry the cost of marking all dense blocks when possibly only a small proportion would be destined for solid separating walls.

BS EN 771

Parts 1-5 of BS EN 771 will be amended to incorporate the amendments driven through by Germany. New National Forewords and National Annexes have been prepared by CBA. It is expected that the revised standards will be published by BSI in October 2005. BS 6073-1 will be withdrawn on 1 April 2006.

BS 5628

All three parts of the code are now at an advanced stage of review and will be republished by BSI before the end of 2005. The revised parts of this code will refer to BS EN 771.

News from the THB



Jim Holland
Director THB

A Head of Steam!

Last issue saw a wide-ranging report from Martin Clarke, Chief Executive of BPCF in his role as Chairman of the Traditional Housing Bureau. This note is from a new pen! I'm Jim Holland, I entered the fray as Director of THB and the Modern Masonry Alliance at the beginning of July, from Tarmac Topblock. I have had senior jobs in precast and blockmaking for over 30 years, and have been a sponsor of THB since its inception, and the 'Right to know' campaign before that.

My background is one of masonry industry knowledge and involvement with a solid technical base; also as an amateur builder and renovator. I hope I can use that to good effect now with the great project that THB is. I serve the masonry industry through its sponsors – and the CBA is one of the major ones. It is plain to see that a revitalised CBA is going from strength to strength under Chris' leadership. It is my job to give value for money through the wider support of masonry - in use - and performing brilliantly. My mobile number is 07917 757 950.

In the last issue the expression 'pivotal year' for the block industry was used, and the sentiment holds good. The unprecedented attack on masonry by Government and its agents continues unabated. The ill-conceived '£60k house' competition confirms that taxpayer's money is being spent to promote a particular outcome.

The initiative is being used to showcase lightweight frame construction. Whilst it is true that little masonry is seen in the shortlisted entries, this is hardly surprising. The supply chain in our business is much

longer than for 'kit' manufacturers, and for self-build they supply the end-user direct. We should not put this one in the 'too difficult' pile, however, but redouble efforts to devise brick/block designs to demonstrate what the product can do. Do CBA members and supporters believe that these designs can be cheaper than £60k? [Answers on a postcard, please, and you know where to send them.](#)



THB has been running a hugely successful campaign highlighting the gulf in performance between masonry and lightweight frames in FIRE. This is one of those subjects where the harder you look, the more you find. This emotive subject has made the phone 'red hot'(!) of late with journalists reacting to our press releases about spectacular fires in timber framed structures.

June, July and August have seen a spate of part-finished frames being razed to the ground very quickly and hence very dangerously. An almost-complete £1.5M 4-storey T/F block in Bridgwater had to be

completely demolished in early August, the day following a fire in the stairwell which tore through the roof very quickly. Emergency services could not enter, either during or after the fire.

Ten units in a terraced row of T/F social housing at Faversham, Kent were completely obliterated on the 12th August – the fire was hot enough to destroy much of the surrounding scaffolding.

Similarly, four T/F part-built houses were razed on the 22nd June at Bishop's Waltham in Hampshire. The fire was hot enough to cause 'radiated heat damage' to three terraced bungalows, according to Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, elderly residents were evacuated from those bungalows. Indeed, the properties destroyed were 'intended for older people' according to the fire brigade.

Remember Yarl's Wood detention centre? The severity of arson-induced fire caused a loss of over £80M. Damaged areas were replaced by masonry. All of these events bear retelling – by anyone

with an interest in our industry – until legislators listen, and take a hard look at this Government-sponsored drift back towards a combustible housing stock.

Last issue mentioned collaborative work on fire with like-minded European allies, a meeting in Stockholm in early August of the 'Forestry' (anti, that is-) committee of BIBM chaired by Martin Clarke shared European experiences. It has to be borne in mind that European timber interests are supported by British taxes through the Common Ag... yes. THB/MMA needs your support to bring facts like these to the widest possible audience, but principally anyone who can influence Government. Flooding is a similar topic. Insurability is an issue in all these cases.

Following fire, the next 3-month theme from THB will be sustainability. This is a topic which the wood people like to think is their own. Until you start to look...

Climate change is a fearsome prospect, not least because many scientists believe that if we reach a certain point the rate will increase further, and become irreversible. The certain thing is that even with all of man's CO₂ –releasing changes in the pipeline already, temperatures will rise for decades to come. Masonry has a part to play which lightweight constructions cannot, because of its greater thermal storage capability.

A very recent report by Arup endorses the view that lightweight structures will need energy-hungry (and CO₂ – releasing) mechanical air-conditioning. This report was commissioned by the AACPA and contains aircrete examples. This follows the original work with frame and dense masonry and further endorses the fact that all masonry is best. See THB website for a download.

Those who know of the 'Earthdome' project will be pleased to hear that Bob Harris is shortlisted for the Housing Innovation Awards, announcement at the dinner at the Savoy on the 7th September. THB wishes him luck.

More news soon on French Termites! This topic is an emotive one, with a potential to highlight one of the key benefits of masonry over lightweight construction. No free lunch with masonry.

As ever, our exhibitions programme deserves your attendance and support, contact Anita Ladva at the THB office – 0116 222 9841

On a personal note, thanks for all the support in these first few weeks with THB/MMA from colleagues in the industry.

Concrete Block Association Website

For the latest information from the Concrete Block Association please check out our website at www.cba-blocks.org.uk

The website includes:

- Membership lists
- CBA literature (downloadable pdfs and hard copies via a literature request form)
- Easy Guide 'How to Use Concrete Blocks' with illustrations

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Latest developments
- Latest DTI and industry statistics

To keep up-to-date with CBA press activity a press cutting archive can be found at www.cba-blocks.org.uk/members

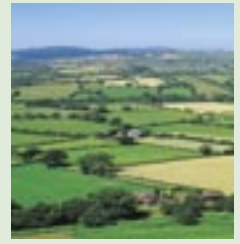
If you would like a link on your website to the CBA site (which helps search engine positioning) then please e-mail: studio@ajadesign.co.uk



Environmental & Sustainability

Performance

Colin Marshall
Concrete Block
Association -
Marketing Committee



We all of course want to be 'greener' and contribute to the sustainability of future homes as well as other buildings, but where is the crossover between this desire and unproductive legislation and non-cost effective sustainability measures?

A Report, 'Putting a price on sustainability', by cost consultants Cyril Sweet and the Building Research Establishment (BRE) gives us some clues by confirming that although reaching the highest standards of environmental performance does incur cost (up to 7% increase in a buildings capital cost) there are major performance improvements that can be achieved cost effectively.

Apart from the obvious responsibility we all share to develop sustainable construction, there are also increasing commercial reasons for the block industry to take into account, for example :

- English Partnerships require partner developers to achieve a minimum BREEAM or EcoHomes 'very good' rating.
- The Housing Corporation requires an EcoHomes 'good' rating for any scheme they fund.
- High profile builders and developers are increasingly seeking sustainability parity with the partners they engage.
- Contractors in the public sector must achieve BREEAM 'excellent' for all new buildings. Wider sustainability may also be addressed in the tendering process.
- National and local planning requirements will increasingly take account of sustainability issues.

One of the key findings of this Report is that many sustainability measures can be introduced at minimal cost and a limited

number of items are available at zero extra cost or may even offer a cost saving.

However, one drawback highlighted, typically with the BREEAM type environmental assessment methods, is that several credits are awarded towards the environmental score based on the site location. Although there is sense in this, schemes very rarely present themselves giving a number of site location options. The practical consequences of this are that a disproportionate effort has got to be made towards improving performance in other areas, sometimes at a disproportionate cost. Notwithstanding this, low or no-cost options suitable for any building type include:

- Specifying water efficient appliances.
- Where timber is used with masonry (upper floors, pitched roofs etc) it should be sourced from sustainability certified sources.
- Commitment to good construction practice.
- Providing low-energy lighting.
- Considering optimum building shape and orientation.

Air-conditioning should be avoided where possible due to the resulting CO₂ emissions as well as avoidance of its capital cost. Instead, more sustainable solutions such as incorporating high thermal mass construction - masonry is a good example - together with other passive measures such as solar shading should be considered.

Interestingly high mass construction tends not to score as well as stand alone elements, but when considering the trade-offs that are possible, it is often a very cost effective environmental solution. Hence the importance of encouraging designers/specifiers to consider the overall project rather than concentrate on one or two materials issues.

Whilst sustainable construction is supposed to 'future proof our buildings, the climate change predictions for the UK over the next 50 years are seriously questioning whether lightweight construction, e.g. timber frame, could become prematurely obsolete. This is not to scaremonger but to enter serious debate about the environmental and social impact that climate change will have on buildings of all types in the future.

To ignore the issue of climate change now would be doing a disservice to future generations in trying to cope with buildings which could be uncomfortable and unhealthy – and imagine the prospect of retrofitting air conditioning large numbers of buildings with the resultant cost and potential increase in CO₂ emissions.

The Code for Sustainable Buildings, reported in the last CBA Update, continues in its development. Key issues being addressed for code compliant homes include water, waste, materials, energy efficiency as well as serviceability requirements.

Producing a Code that is worthwhile, and does not conflict with or repeat current building regulations and environmental guidance, is going to be a challenging task. There may even be issues of restrictions to trade to be considered. For example Denmark is legally challenging some of the UK requirements for the use of certified timber. It is envisaged that formal consultation of the draft Code for Sustainable Buildings will take place in October 2005, with implementation expected in the first half of 2006. The CBA continue to be involved in the development of the Code but would very much welcome any comments from members during the consultation phase.

The BRE have started a process in conjunction with industry to review

its Green Guide. The purpose of the review is many fold but a key objective is to better align the tool with other emerging initiatives such as the Code for Sustainable Buildings, the Construction Products Directive, Building Regulation changes, ISO and CEN standardisation as well as the recent draft UK bill on sustainability and security. The timetable has been set and the review process is expected to conclude in August 2006 (e-publish), followed by a paper version in February 2007.

The review is extremely detailed and will cover format and content of the Green Guide, the Life Cycle methodology, specifications and whole life performance. It is a process that is extremely important for the CBA

to engage in and use its influence to promote the many environmental benefits of using concrete blockwork.

CBA has received initial feedback from BRE with regard to its work on environmental profiles and possible Green Guide ratings and further information will be provided to Members on this subject.



Concrete Centre News

Concrete solutions for a changing climate

The Concrete Centre has published a report examining why, because of predicted increased global warming, the combination of high thermal mass and night cooling looks set to become a key feature in the design of many new buildings.

Increasing energy prices, changes to the Building Regulations and growing concern over climate change are questioning the use of energy intensive air conditioning. However, with the global climate change the demand for air conditioning

may increase. This is bad news for the environment and for operating costs.

The report examines how the combination of high thermal mass and night cooling is a very cost-effective and sustainable alternative to air conditioning.

'Thermal mass: a concrete solution for the changing climate' report is available free of charge from The Concrete Centre. To request a copy e-mail literature@concretecentre.com or visit www.concretecentre.com and download a PDF version.



Annual General Meeting



The fourteenth AGM of the CBA was held on the 10 May 2005 at Leicester Tigers RFC, Leicester.

Chris Hudson was re-elected as Chairman but informed the meeting that he wished to stand down from the Chairmanship at the next AGM. Frank Gaiger was elected Vice-Chairman.

Chris reviewed the current market against a background of continued consolidation in Builders and Builders' Merchants businesses.

Timber frame market share continues to show slow growth and stood at 8% at the end of 2004.

During 2004, aggregate blocks had increased volume sold by 0.2% over 2003 whilst aerated blocks had fallen by 7%. Lightweight blocks had performed better than dense.

The principal reasons for increasing market share were:

- Achievements of the Technical Committee, particularly in achieving four Part E RD approvals
- An increase in the number of flats being built
- Continued growth in beam and block flooring.

The first three months of 2005 showed an overall increase over 2004 but early indications were that April would show a decrease on last year with builders expressing mixed views for the year.

Consumer confidence is low based on:

- High Street sales
- Mortgage equity withdrawal
- General Election.

On Health & Safety issues, Chris reported that we continue to work closely with HSE to resolve the issues regarding blocks weighing over 20kg, which represent approximately 12% of members' sales.

The Road Haulage Safety Initiative working group are progressing. The working group comprises representatives of large and small member companies, HSE and a haulage company. Considerable testing has been completed at MIRA. Presentations had been made by suppliers and the drafting of good practice documents has been progressed. Identification of preferred methods of pack configuration, pack banding and pack retention remain to be finalised before producing the proposed Code of Practice safety guide for review by CBA members.

With regard to sustainability, Chris stated that since April 2003 it has been the policy that all new government buildings should have a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating or a 'Very Good' in the case of refurbishments.

In addition the Housing Corporation has required that all homes built with their grant funding by Housing Associations and other Residential Social Landlords to have an EcoHomes rating. English Partnerships had a similar requirement for all their developments prior to April 2003.

Within the EC there are plans to develop a European Standard that will require construction product manufacturers to prepare Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for their products. EPDs are calculated using an established methodology and are used to quantify the effect that a product has on the environment on a number of dimensions such as global warming, resource depletion and human toxicity.

The Construction Industry and Government bodies appear to have adopted the BRE Environmental Product Profiling Scheme that provides a standard unit of measurement of environmental performance and is expressed in Ecopoints. This is based on the impact of one UK citizen on the environment (100 Ecopoints = Impact of one UK citizen for one year). A Green Guide Rating is also given (A, B or C) where A is the best.

In response, CBA had set up a project team, Chaired by Dr Miles Watkins, to develop environmental generic product profiles for CBA members.

Presentations relating to the latest activities of Traditional Housing Bureau, the Marketing and Technical Committees were also made.

Finally the Chairman thanked the Tigers staff for their work on the day, David Zanker and the BPCF staff for arranging the day and for their support during the year, the presenters for their contributions, the attendees at the meeting and all members for their committed support.



The Concrete Block Association 2005

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