

Industry Update

Dr Thorsten Mrosek is CEO of Wood Germany

The increased use of contemporary timber products from sustainably managed forests can play a significant role in managing the global challenges of our time, including climate protection and sustainable development. At



Thorsten Mrosek

the same time, there is also a great need for information around the world regarding the diverse applications and unique advantages of modern timber construction solutions and high-quality timber products.

Even countries in which timber construction is already playing a significant role must still do more to improve the general conditions for modern and innovative timber construction. In this context, timber marketing activities that span across companies, such as the UK's Wood for Good initiative, play a particularly important role.

In countries in which modern timber construction plays a minor role but which have great potential as growth markets, there is an even greater need for information and support from wood-producing and exporting nations.

The German timber industry has traditionally been among the global technology and market leaders and the German Timber Promotion Fund (GTPF) successfully promoted the use of wood both in Germany and abroad for many years.

Since the dissolution of the organisation and the discontinuation of its German Timber international marketing programme in 2009, the industry is working on new marketing approaches. The new institution "Wood Future" (Zukunft Holz GmbH) aims to continue selected tasks of the GTPF. This organisation is still in the start-up phase, and is currently offering technical advice for domestic timber construction. Wood Germany (www.woodgermany.com) is the new international B2B marketing platform for the German timber industry. The platform offers basic information on timber issues and also introduces export-oriented companies and institutions.

The German wood industry has always made an important contribution to international timber marketing activities. The intention is to maintain this contribution so that the great potential offered by wood with respect to climate protection and sustainable development can be used to an even greater extent on a worldwide basis.

• TTJ Industry updates are a forum for trade bodies to address key issues.

Guest Column

Simon Jones is business development manager of Boise Cascade

Assuming that decreasing infant mortality and improving life expectancy powered by truly amazing advances in medical science have a greater effect on our population growth than Eurotunnel, it is likely that the 60 odd million of us living on this sceptred isle will continue to increase in number.

These 60 million people occupy 25 million dwellings of a myriad different styles, ages, qualities and costs. Some homes will be well maintained and age gracefully, some will not.

For the last couple of years, we have struggled to build 100,000 homes a year, let alone exceed the heady heights of 200,000 per year that has proved to be a maximum run rate over the last couple of decades.

At 100,000 homes per year, it will take us 250 years to work through a replacement cycle of our current housing stock. If we get back to 200,000 houses per year, it will still take 125 years to replace current stock.

For some of our housing stock, this timescale will be way too long. With reasonable expectations of ongoing population growth, we have a massive problem looming. Such imbalances in supply and demand can only serve to fuel continued long-term house price inflation, further challenging the affordability of housing for many in our society, whether by direct ownership or in rented.

Whilst many older properties are successfully transformed into fine homes, in general how many 100-year-old houses are truly suited to today's living?

Other than ensuring the basic human requirements of shelter, power and water in and waste out, we should focus on making our homes work for the visible future. We should be cautious about trying to "future-proof" our housing. Other than the basics, we don't know what the need will be in the centuries to come and whether our housing will or should last.

In recognising the need to provide sufficient housing to suit our growing, evolving population we must embrace methods of home provision that provide cost-effective, adaptable

solutions and rapid delivery.

Offsite manufacturing provides for quality and efficiency, but it is hard to truly transfer and fully recognise these "square peg" advantages to home provision when these highly-effective solutions are forced into the "round hole" of the current vernacular.

We need to encourage society to accept a change to our housing style; to stop worrying about castles to last a millennium and seek solutions and styles that suit our needs in a resource-efficient and recyclable manner – and within that encourage the use of solutions from the world's timber industry, the ultimate in renewable construction material resource.

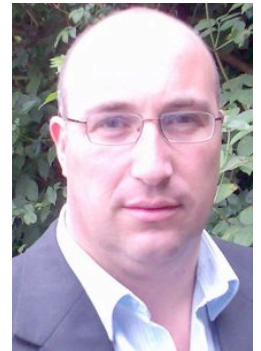
We have the science to do efficient, renewable and recyclable and we have the skillsets and factories to do the manufacturing.

We need the political will to drive the trend, guiding society to a different home style and ethos that enables us to build houses in the volume needed and that are affordable, environmentally sound and can be adapted to future requirements.

A useful side effect of such social responsibility will be the reinforcement of the most important and often ignored foundation of our economy:

- home construction and its supply chains drive vast industries in their own right;
- funding home construction drives a vast financial industry in its own right;
- home occupation drives a vast goods and services industry in its own right;
- funding such home occupation drives a vast industry in its own right.

Let's get on with it...



Simon Jones

Letter to the Editor

National Panel Products Division to set up online committee to promote best practice

The Timber Trade Federation's National Panel Products Division (NPPD), of which I am chairman, recently debated at length the correct labelling and marking of the plywood the industry sells.

Allegations of mismarking and mislabelling are still made despite the steps the NPPD has taken over the years to drive this unwanted, unnecessary and, in some cases, fraudulent activity out of the industry.

The NPPD has therefore set up a small online committee to examine and promote best practice, and this group will be happy to

receive photographic examples of issues that members believe demonstrate inappropriate or fraudulent practice. (*see p5*)

At the same time, a new TTF Code of Conduct will be put to the members in June which will, if approved, toughen up the procedures and sanctions available to the TTF if any member does not abide by our Code of Conduct.

Robert C Harvey
Chairman
NPPD