



A sustainable revolution

John Newcomb, Chief Executive Officer at the Builders Merchants Federation, highlights how the industry is pushing the sustainability message.

We only have to look at the extreme weather patterns experienced worldwide in the past year, with unprecedented heatwaves and catastrophic rainfall causing devastating fires and flooding across the globe, to realise that tackling carbon is the single biggest challenge we face over the coming decade.

It is something that the UK construction industry has prioritised, and I'm delighted that an increasing number of BMF member companies are achieving Business Champion status under the Construction Leadership Council's CO2nstructZero zero carbon change programme.

Each month proposals from potential Business Champions are assessed against the nine priority action areas highlighted in the CO2nstructZero BMF members have been prominent in each of the three monthly rounds to date.

In July, Cocun, Hanson UK, JCB, Knauf Insulation, Saint Gobain

and Steel Blue joined the existing BMF Business Champions ACO Technologies, APP Wholesale, Bradfords Building Supplies, Ibstock, Peak, Travis Perkins Plc and Wavin.

Each one has demonstrated the work they are undertaking to tackle carbon within their operations and committed to sharing their experience with others in the industry to help everyone gain knowledge and learn from their peers.

This is something that businesses of every size must act upon. The BMF is not only supporting members on their path to net zero, we are also taking proactive steps to reduce our own impact. The BMF is not a large organisation by any means, but we have signed up to the SME Climate Commitment to halve the greenhouse gasses we produce by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2040.

As a first step we are reviewing the day to day sustainability of our operations, for example lighting, climate control, printers and toner waste, use of plastics and travel/car use and have already identified

simple and relatively low cost ways to reduce our carbon output and create a healthier working environment. We are also speaking to our suppliers and utilities companies to confirm their commitment to zero carbon.

Assessing our carbon impact now, at the outset of our journey, will enable us to accurately measure our progress, which is exactly how the CLC CO2nstructZero programme's measurement framework will help the whole industry achieve a common goal.

Earlier this year we introduced a new Sustainability Forum, chaired by Giles Bradford of Bradfords Building Supplies. The Forum, which next meets on 27 November, brings together merchants and supplier members for regular briefings, discussions and to share progress and best practice.

Sustainability is a primary theme in the four major BMF events this Autumn. Andrew Griffith MP, the UK's Net Zero Business Champion is one of the main speakers at our Members' Day

Conference on 23 September, while the BMF Young Merchant Conference on 6 October includes a presentation by Angus MacDonald, the founder of Galion Homes which is doing some incredible work on sustainable construction.

The BMF Parliamentary Reception on 19 October will showcase sustainability in the manufacture and distribution of building materials and home improvement products, to show MPs how our members use materials' science and process technology to develop low-carbon solutions, increase resource efficiency, and improve product performance.

Last but not least, there will be a dedicated Sustainability Forum, sponsored by Ibstock, at the BMF All Industry Conference from 4-7 November and, for the first time ever, this Conference will include an exhibition of over 60 suppliers with a central hub featuring the BMF's CO2nstructZero Business champions.

This is the beginning of a long journey, but it is one that, collectively, we cannot afford to ignore. ■