

Moulding Together

Welcome to our Spring 2020 Newsletter

'Nobody told me there'd be days like these, strange days indeed, strange days indeed'. (John Lennon – Nobody Told Me)

Hello everyone and welcome to a slightly shorter newsletter than normal, but one that we feel is important to send to you all and keep in touch during a time when many of us will feel isolated socially and mentally.

The COVID-19 pandemic is something that none of us have experienced in our lifetime and hopefully will never do so again – our thoughts go out to anyone impacted and our thanks go out to those working in the health & emergency services across the world but especially in the UK & Ireland as we seek to first limit the rate of infection and ultimately defeat the virus, which I am confident we will.



It is also important to remember the vital contribution of those working hard to keep our countries running such as drivers, supermarket staff, refuse collectors – the list is considerable, but without their effort and commitment we would grind to a halt.

I know you all as resilient and resourceful people and also know you all well enough to know that you will be looking to the future with positivity and so you should.

Prior to the current situation, the business had been making good progress and I am confident this will continue to be the case when this is all over – make no mistake when we are all back on our production lines, on the tools, in the warehouse, in our vehicles delivering and selling and behind our desks, we will be busy as the pressure will be on to allow the construction industry to catch-up on lost time.

Everything that is happening behind the scenes during this period is focused upon ensuring we return to work not only at the right time, but ready to service the living hell out of what will be a very demanding customer base.

The imposed break in routine, of seemingly endless consumerism, a reversal in pollution and loss of things that previously appeared life & death matters such as sport will I hope serve as a period of reflection for us all and a timely reminder of things that are actually important – at this point feel free to hum along to another and far more famous John Lennon track – Imagine.

I'm excited at the prospect of seeing everyone again (absence does apparently make the heart grow fonder) and excited about what we can achieve together.

Until we meet again, I hope you, your loved ones and your communities stay fit and healthy.

Graham

Helping Leaders Manage Change Workshop for W Howard

As part of our on-going commitment to developing people within the business, Total Excellence Centre in the form of Tess Bill were engaged to design and deliver a bespoke workshop to address the issue of managing change within the company.

**TOTAL
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Tess (pictured below) was selected as the Consultant to carry out this piece of work, aimed at supporting Managers and Colleagues, to work through the impact of introducing and implementing a new Business System. The workshop was delivered on the 21st January 2020 to a mixed group of multi-functional Managers. The team were fully engaged in the process and were taken through a series of developmental exercises and discussion group exercises to explore thoughts and ideas for Managing Change appropriately, being mindful of the needs and feelings of the people around them.

As a result, the following outcomes were achieved:



- Addressed the impact of 'Change' within W. Howard Ltd, specifically the Strategic objective of implementing a new Business System throughout the business.
- Raised awareness for the need to change and to act as a change agent throughout the process
- Identified the key issues facing Managers when implementing Change and how to handle the key stages with better success
- Recognised which Leadership skills and behaviours can be useful in a changing environment and how to develop these when operating internally and externally
- Consider a values-based approach to moving individuals forward throughout the change period, whilst maintaining business as usual

Continuous Improvement for W Howard Group

During February and March, the UK operation achieved retention of ISO9001 (Quality Standard), ISO14001 (Environmental Standard) and transitioned successfully from OHSAS18001 to the new ISO45001 (Health & Safety Standard).

This would be a an excellent achievement under normal conditions but is all the more notable because there were zero non-conformances or comments for improvements; the team of auditors were extremely complimentary about our systems and critically about how we use them on a daily basis, so congratulations to everyone but special mentions to Joe Rylance (Health & Safety Coordinator UK) and Neil Wilkinson (QEBM) for their pivotal roles in delivering such an outstanding result.

At W Howard we embraced the idea of importing expertise to support our knowledge gaps and have been working with QEBM since 2006.

QEBM was started by the late Tom Wilkinson who guided us through our early days before his son Neil picked up the baton and he has driven us through all the subsequent challenges of growth with commitment you would normally hope for only from employees.

I asked Neil to provide an insight into ISO accreditations and here are his words...

I thought I would take a moment to provide an update on our latest external ISO audit by our UKAS accredited Certification body; whilst I am not an employee, I support and assist W Howard through my company across various areas in relation to ISO compliance and continual improvement.

My company QEBM Ltd is a Management Consultancy based in Bolton assisting, supporting and advising a range of business across manufacturing, engineering, recycling and construction sectors.

Why do we have the ISO systems?

The systems provide structure to everything we do, allow us to assess risk across the business, ensure a healthy and safe working environment, reduce our environmental impact and strive to exceed our customer requirements both in product quality and service.

Achieving the standards allows us to communicate to customers and potential new customers confidence, in that W Howard operate robust systems which are externally certified for compliance.

The audit was fairly intense and involved five individual very experienced auditors (all who had never visited W Howard previously) examining our management system, interviewing personnel and reviewing our supporting evidence together with an in depth examination of how we undertake our Manchester Operations.

The audit was conducted over three days, and whilst the auditors work to a plan, they can and do request to observe several operations at random and request supporting evidence for those operations.

Some companies, the prospect of an audit fills them with dread; however whilst there is always a degree of uncertainty as to how the audit will progress I was confident that, due to the constant work and improvements implemented by the team across all departments we would have a positive audit.

The audit covered our Quality, ISO 9001:2015, Environmental 14001:2015 and a migration from BS 18001:2007 to the new H&S standard ISO 45001:2018 (very few companies in our industry appear to have achieved this new standard) with the result being that we successfully passed the audit with no Non-Conformances raised across all standards which is a truly outstanding result from such an in depth audit.

This is not a one person achievement but involves a huge amount of dedication and commitment from personnel across the business in order to be successful and ensure we continually improve our business, and I would like to thank everyone for the part they played in helping us maintain our certification.

Neil Wilkinson www.qebm.co.uk



Accreditation – FSC

As a group we retained our FSC accreditation in spite of severe disruption around the COVID-19 pandemic which meant that the proposed physical audits in Manchester and Kildare ultimately became remote audits.

Thanks to everyone for continuing to adhere to our FSC procedures on a daily basis as this is of vital importance to our business and also a word of thanks to BM Trada for responding to unprecedented circumstances so proactively with our allotted auditor.

Microsoft Business Central

As you will all be aware, we have been making huge strides as we look to introduce our new business system (Microsoft Business Central) which will allow us as a group to perform far more efficiently and effectively both internally and with our customers.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic we had a realistic 'go-live' implementation date of Tuesday 14 April, but regrettably this date will no longer be possible for what I am sure are obvious reasons.

Despite this setback there continues to be a lot of work going on behind the scenes with our partners Tecman and CI Consult both of whom are supporting our sales, estimating and production planning teams to iron out as many glitches as possible by training and testing the system online from home.

This is excellent work and I would like to commend all those playing their part in this process but a special mention to Darragh Walsh who is based in Kildare and is bringing to the table invaluable commitment, contribution and ability for the entire group as a result of utilising skills learned whilst achieving his 1st class honours degree in Business Information Systems from Galway Mayo Institution of Technology.

W Howard Group Values and Behaviours



New Year / New Me – Time for a restart on our values & behaviours; unlike fad diets and binge exercising, these need to become part of our daily working lives; let's all make these values and behaviours part of our normal daily lives once we're all 'back in the saddle'.

Loyalty Awards

Congratulations and thank you to all being celebrated for their loyalty to the Group

Jamie Mills – Astley

John Locke – Astley



Community / Charity Work



The W Howard Group were proud to support Everton in the Community, the award-winning charity of Everton Football Club by donating a corporate table to a couple that had tragically lost their son aged 7 to cancer in March 2019.

As a family they had moved from Liverpool to Brisbane in 2014 and were coming 'home' to spend Christmas with their family this year; as a coincidence on Boxing Day / St Stephen's Day, Everton were hosting Burnley and it was our pleasure to be able to provide what turned out to be a memorable occasion for the couple who prior to emigrating were season ticket holders at Goodison Park.

Significant Birthdays

Happy Birthday to the following people who have celebrated significant birthdays recently

Josh Ridings – Leigh
Shaun Barrington – Astley
Dan Darwell – Leigh
David French – Leigh
Neville Waring – Glazebury
Dean Southern – Leigh
Chris Grundy – Glazebury
Thomas Smith – Newtown
Rob Murphy – Glazebury
Kevin Brandish – Glazebury
Paul Ashurst – Astley
Bill Bailey – Astley
Stuart Murray - Astley



New Starters

A big warm welcome to the following people who have joined us here at the W Howard Group;

Kevin Kirby Girdlestone – Manufacturing Astley, Process Worker
Daniel Brady – Logistics Glazebury, FLT Driver / Order Picker
Krzysztof Gierszewski – Logistics LDC, Multi-Drop Delivery Driver
John Wharton – Logistics Glazebury, LGV Driver
Steven Taylor – Manufacturing Astley, Production Manager
Christopher Dumkow – Logistics Glazebury, LGV Driver
James Leader – External Sales, Sales Executive

Births



Congratulations to all our employees in the UK and Ireland, that have become parents since our last newsletter.

BENCHMARK Kitchens and Joinery

Benchmark Kitchen & Joinery Inspire Event 2020.

In February the sales team exhibited at the Benchmark kitchen event in Stoneleigh, Warwickshire over 3 days. The event is held annually and allows the company to showcase its new ranges for the coming year to over 500 staff members from all 180 branches nationwide.

W. Howard have agreed a comprehensive new range of

Kota, Wrapped, Veneered, Window Boards and various white primed profiles as well as the new Wall Panelling kits which were all exhibited. The show was a huge success for W Howard and sets us up for a busy 2020 with Benchmark.



L-R

Our new wall panelling system designed and produced in Kildare painted in Tranquil Dawn.

Our new sample display board providing a contemporary platform for our range.

Andy Minas & Jake Cintra on the stand, ready for business.



We're delighted to have been nominated for Best Timber Manufacturer Award at the upcoming BMJ Magazine 2020 Industry Awards.

This is a significant achievement and we are one of five shortlisted for the award.

Well done to everyone!!!



007

McDonnell, David McDonnell celebrates 25 years with W Howard Limited this year and has been recalling his journey; here is part of his blog available on W Howard social media and www.whoard.eu

'Having been with the company for so long, I've seen the highs and the lows as we've grown from a single site to a £34m group. What's been so good about being with W Howard all that time is that I've got to know everyone so well. I consider Jonathan Grant (CEO) to be a personal friend as well as an employer and so many of the customers I

deal with now are the same people I was working with 20 years ago. It's wonderful to be in an industry where you make lifelong friends, not just colleagues'

Congratulations David, thank you for the expertise, commitment and humour you have brought to the business – here's to many more

years of being shaken but not stirred!



REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS



We welcome two new rigid trucks to our fleet, both operating out of LDC (London Distribution Centre) and both conforming to ULEZ (Ultra Low Emission Zone) regulations allowing us to deliver in London in an environmentally responsible manner.

Simon Fleet (Group Commercial Director) said

‘At W Howard, we are keen to be as environmentally friendly as possible, so when we were looking to upgrade our fleet of delivery vehicles it made absolute sense to choose the very best and most efficient trucks we could. Mercedes-Benz is a fantastic brand that like The W Howard Group offers first class customer service and innovative features as standard on it’s products. The impressive safety features available with the Acros Trucks mean our drivers can carry out their work safe in the knowledge that they have the very best safety features to hand’.

FINALLY...

We have set up the following e-mail addresses covid19support@whoward.co.uk and covid19support@whowardkildare.ie for anyone who may be feeling isolated and in need of a chat to perhaps help put things into perspective.

Any messages will come directly through to me and rest assured if there is something I or the company can do to help, we will do so and any communication will be 100% discreet – nobody but you will know that you have been in contact.

Nobody is immune from feelings of loneliness or insecurity – remember...

Mental
Health
Matters