

New eco-friendly foundation speeds construction

A new building foundation system unveiled by Roger Bullivant Limited (RBL) is set to speed up the laying of foundations and take new builds closer to carbon neutrality.

'SystemFirst' is an innovative foundation combining galvanised steel beams and high density polystyrene to create a strong, sustainable, lightweight and highly insulated floor slab.

RBL Director John Patch said that SystemFirst can help developers to achieve Sustainable Home Code 6 – which means a building is completely carbon neutral. He added: "Use of SystemFirst on its own will not be enough to reach Code 6 for a whole building. But coupled with other systems, such as geothermal heating and use of renewables like solar energy, it is possible to achieve this target."

Delegates from across the building sector attended an opening day and demonstration event at RBL's head office and manufacturing facility near Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire in July. A building plot had earlier been prepared with a support system and caps installed in the ground before the demonstration, to show how quickly and simply SystemFirst can be pieced together, took place.

Laying the SystemFirst foundation is like putting together a puzzle. Prefabricated steel beams are manufactured and sheets of polystyrene insulation are cut to size off site and clearly labelled in

line with construction drawings before being delivered to the site. The system can be laid by a team of just three people, positioning each piece by matching the labels according to the drawings.

The first sections to be laid were the steel ground beams containing service ducts, which are secured on to the concrete pile caps, spaced at 3.5m centres for the purposes of the demonstration. Steel reinforcing bars are then added to the ground beams to give added support to the foundation.

Each polystyrene panel, complete with cold rolled steel edging, is designed to be lightweight and requires no more than two people to lift it. Use of the material also removes the need to use heavy lifting equipment.

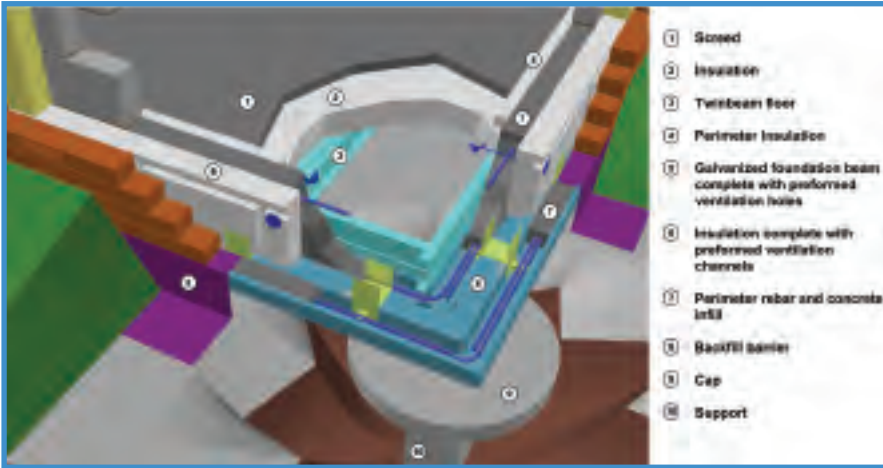
Once the floor panels are in place, another layer of thin polystyrene is added on top, followed by installation of a polystyrene 'thermal break'. Specialist magnetic steel brackets were used to secure temporary shuttering in place before RBL's

self compacting and self-levelling concrete was poured to create a solid base and complete the foundation.

SystemFirst is a very versatile foundation, RBL's John Patch said: "This system can be used for a single dwelling or a commercial foundation, irrespective of the number and variety of the buildings. Depending on the size of each plot, a team of three people can lay the foundations for about three or four buildings each day."


RBL Chief Engineer Nigel Rate said: "SystemFirst has huge possibilities. At the moment it is being used for building houses, but there is no reason why it cannot be used for building other much larger structures such as schools or offices. Our own two storey office was built on a SystemFirst foundation."

Improved safety is one of many benefits of specifying SystemFirst over traditional foundation construction. There are no heavy lifting equipment machines or plant needed on site while the foundation is put together as each piece can be lifted, carried and fixed in place by hand. No cutting equipment is required as all of the pieces are cut to size in the factory before being delivered to site. Use of prefabricated materials reduces



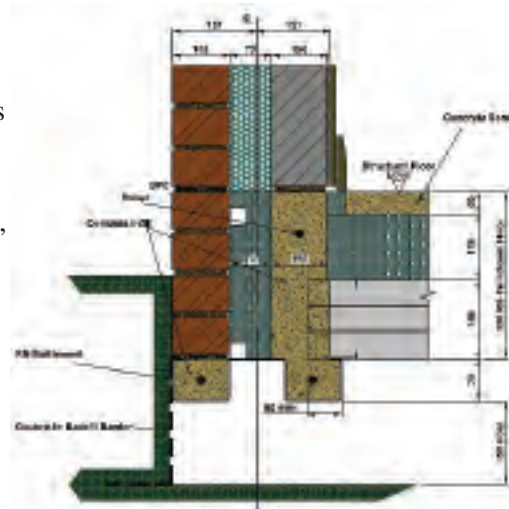
sued 4,287 litres of water during construction compared with 36,026 litres for the traditional method. In terms of materials used, a typical SystemFirst foundation uses 18 tonnes of concrete compared with 233 tonnes used in the trench fill.

At the demonstration day, John Patch concluded: "If we, as a nation, adopt the sort of construction methods we have seen today we will all see substantial savings in emissions and the environment."



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waste and associated lorry movements.

"We have carried out a lot of research into the system to find its true benefits, but the differences with conventional methods of installing a foundation were more significant than we had expected," Mr Rake added. In a comparison between SystemFirst and a traditional trench fill foundation method for the same floor area, SystemFirst created 12.7 tonnes of CO₂ compared with 72.9 tonnes with the traditional method. The new system also

AGM and National Rally

EIGHTEEN members attended the AGM at Donnington Manor and it was very pleasing to be able to welcome some new members who had travelled long distances to join the meeting and attend the Rally.

Ian Rea, National President, read his speech and outlined that future strategy and the survival of the Institute had been discussed at Executive level but the future did depend on support and commitment from Regions. There was further discussion about the future under Any Other Business.

Ian referred to the sad loss of John Maddox who had been an active member of the South West Region and also to the serious injury that had befallen Ian Trickey, who is also a member of South West Region. Mike Bishop gave an update in his report on Ian stating he is making slow progress.

The Director of Finance confirmed the accounts are healthy and the Director of Membership updated on the membership position which he confirmed had remained constant.

Vic Lander was inaugurated as President and Mark Rea as National Vice President.

The National Rally followed the AGM when the majority of members attending the AGM and their wives visited Hever Castle the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII. Due to a generous donation from a member entry to the Gardens was free to everyone.

The Dinner & Dance in the evening held at the Donnington Manor Hotel was a great success with excellent food, disco and surroundings. Feedback received by the organising committee of C Brown, V Lander and K Watts was very positive. Their thanks goes to all members who attending and contributed towards its success.



Les Helliwell addressing the members



Our new President, Vic Lander welcomes Mark Rea our new Vice President



New Waste Regulations

Builders have been warned that they must take immediate action to comply with new Waste Regulations of the landfill Directive which came into effect during 2008.

According to the waste processing company Mil-tek Direct, many building firms are unaware of the new regulations and how their business might be affected. All businesses must now show that they have 'pre-treated' their waste, they must separate out recyclable waste and treat it appropriately.

A way of complying with the new directive is to reduce the volume of recyclable material by compacting into bales which are then collected for recycling. By separating cardboard & plastic, compacting or baling it, the waste is 'treated' and turned into dense bales for collection & recycling.

For more information on the new regulations and compliance advice phone 01242 620903 or go to www.miltek-uk.co.uk

Work your accounts to get through tough times

As it becomes even more crucial to manage finances effectively in the current construction climate, it is worth applying the following financial tips from Wellers Accountants.

Ensure you are recording and chasing retentions as these can often be the difference between a profit and loss on a project. It may also be appropriate to negotiate projects that do not have a retention, which is becoming more common in some areas of the construction industry.

If you are a limited company and not paid gross under the CIS scheme ensure you are taking advantage of CIS offsets with monthly PAYE.

If you can get your accounts completed quickly after the year end you can calculate the projected tax payments for the business. Payments on account for unincorporated businesses can be reduced and reclaimed if you are confident of the final taxable profit.

It may be more attractive to have money owed to you by HMRC by overpaying or paying early for your taxation liabilities, rather than in a bank account. A review with your bank manager is essential to compare the rates of interest. This could also help to keep your deposits below £50,000, the threshold for government guaranteed deposits.

If you are likely to make a loss this year you can submit a carry back claim and reduce your current tax bill in some circumstances.

Make sure you are on top of your credit control, for example do credit checks on new and existing customers, consider interest on late payments and encourage customers to pay more quickly by giving discounts.

Review your own credit terms with suppliers and try to negotiate longer payment terms. If you don't ask, you don't get.

Asset purchases can be more difficult to fund at present. If you need new equipment consider leasing or hiring. In the long term this may be slightly more expensive but it will give you flexibility in the current climate.

Finally, even if you think your income will be too high to qualify, still register to claim tax credits. In the event that you do qualify, perhaps due to a bad debt, annual investment allowances (AIA's) or unforeseen circumstances, the tax credits claimed now will then become payable. Otherwise the credits will only be backdated by up to three months

Thanks to Wellers Accountants
London & Thames Valley
www.wellersaccountants.co.uk

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ACCOUNTANTS

Safety corner



“chancers on a hot tin roof”

This photograph was taken recently by your editor near Billingshurst in West Sussex”



“it pays to keep an eye on safety!!!”

– this photograph appeared in a recent edition of a national materials information publication.

Adjudication – FAQs

Q If I do not have a written contract and I have a dispute with an employer/contractor/sub-contractor/consultant can I refer that dispute to an adjudicator?

No. The legislation which allows you to refer a dispute to adjudication only applies to written contracts. However, the requirement that the agreement be made in writing includes an agreement made orally whereby the parties refer to (and agree to be bound by) written contract terms eg. a JCT Standard Form of contract. It will also include the scenario where there is an exchange of communications in writing eg. quote and acceptance of that quote. Lastly, it will include agreements which are “evidenced in writing”. This means an oral contract between two parties all terms of which are recorded in writing.

Q What should I do if I receive a “Notice of Intention to Refer a Dispute to Adjudication”?

It is important to act quickly if you receive this document. The time limits are very strict in adjudication. The party commencing the adjudication must usually serve the Referral Notice on you within 7 days of the date of that Notice. Often the adjudicator will direct that you respond within 7 days of the date of receipt of the Referral.

Q A contractor has commenced an adjudication against me in respect of his application for payment.

However I have a counterclaim for defective works and for a sum of money which the contractor owes me on other works. Can I bring my counterclaim into that adjudication?

Unless you have served a “Notice of Intention to Withhold Payment” within the time limits specified under the relevant legislation or contractual provision (usually 7 days before the final date for payment) you cannot raise your counterclaim in that adjudication without the consent of the other party.

However, the courts have held that in the absence of that notice the other party must still show that the amounts they have claimed are contractually due. The adjudicator should not simply award the contractor the full amount of his application for payment but rather ascertain for him/herself whether the sums claimed are payable. Any abatement of the sums due because of defective works should be taken into account by the adjudicator. However, in respect of a counterclaim for monies owed on another contract the adjudicator should decline to consider this matter in the absence of a withholding notice. You will probably need to commence a separate adjudication (as soon as possible in order to avoid being out of pocket) in respect of that claim.

Thanks to Mark Manning at Bevan Ashford – Construction lawyers – www.bevan-ashford.com

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT



An established institute for all levels of management

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email membership@the-icm.com

Diary dates

January 2009

- 14 Southern Region CPD lecture (*see below for details*)
Application of Approved Document Part F: Ventilation

February 2009

- 7 Southern Region 49th Annual Dinner & Dance
Royal Beach Hotel, Southsea
Eric Richards 02392 618049

- 9 South West Region AGM
Stephens Dancentre
Mike Bishop 01962 713000

March 2009

- 9 South West Region CPD lecture
Stephens Dancentre
Mike Bishop 01962 713000

May 2009

- 1-4 Caravan & B&B Rally
Tonbridge, Kent
Mike Bishop 01962 713000

Note: all Southern Region lectures are CPD accredited and certificates will be issued. Food is made available following each lecture. The lectures are held at The Mountbatten Centre Alexandra Park Portsmouth 7.45pm for 8.00pm. Contact Eric Richards 02392 618049

VIEWPOINT is the newsletter of the Institute of Construction Management (ICM) and is for circulation to the members of the Institute. Articles or comments for inclusion are very welcome and in any form.

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Whilst every effort has been made to check the information published in this newsletter, the ICM cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information, claims made, or the editorial content.

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Viewpoint

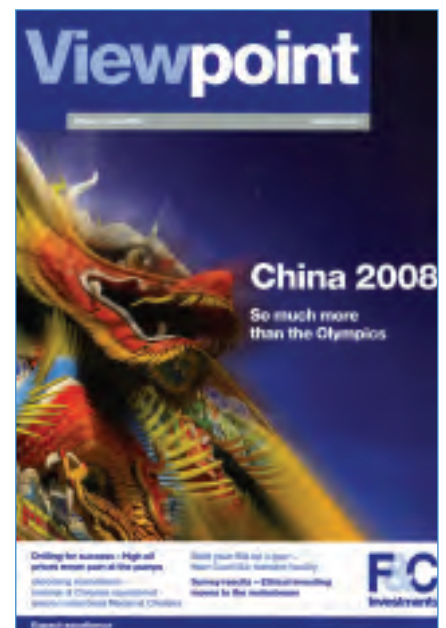
the someday supplement



It has been reported by Experian Construction Forecasts that the effect of the credit crunch on the residential sector has been worse than predicted. Construction started on 200,000 houses in 2007 but for 2008 the figure is unlikely to surpass 125,000 with a further drop to 100,000 in 2009. This is against a background of the previously issued government target of 240,000 new homes per year by 2016 – a figure, which it now looks impossible to achieve. The situation with prices at the time of writing this piece is a recorded drop in the value of houses by 2% in November 2008 with a predicted overall drop of up to 40% over a three-year span. This is in line with the American market, which is leading the British market by about a year. Despite the insecurity in the jobs market the RICS is signalling a slight increase in demand from first time buyers, which would suggest a shortfall to come and the danger of a seriously over-heating the market. David Birkbeck, the CEO of Design for Homes says that the figures, which are literally 70% down, represent a blood bath rather than a downturn. “You’re talking about an industry that’s worth about £18 billion a year going down to something like £6 billion.”

Imitation or flattery?

It seems that we are getting the message across! The investment company F&C have launched their own version of Viewpoint – the bad news is that the content is nowhere near as interesting.



It was interesting to see how they carry out construction in Tenerife, while the ground floor is occupied, with shops and restaurants, the construction carries on above.

The entrance and road is on the right of this photo, and above the shops and restaurant the first floor has 4 rows of glass / reflective panels and behind is a walkway and entrances to the apartments.

Construction is continuing to the first and second floors. A crane can be seen (top middle) which was busy lifting floor sections from a lorry in the road to the fourth floor, these were about 5 meters long and 1.2 meters wide x 200mm thickness. No scaffold, but netting can be seen which I presume is to stop any fallen material.

The orange working platform is for the framework to be erected to hold the glass panels.

People walking below could be at risk, Health and Safety where are you? The blockwork would be rendered, how I don't know, may be they use sky hooks ?

Mike Bishop

ARE YOU A COMPETENT CONTRACTOR?

The law now states that you should be.

Meet your legal duties, whilst providing clients with proof of competency, as a member of a Professional Body.

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Find out more – email membership@the-icm.com
or phone 01962 713000



ARE YOU A COMPETENT CONTRACTOR?

If not you need to be!

Small construction contractors and sole trader tradesmen could find themselves at a disadvantage in the future if they cannot present potential clients with proof of their competence. Increasingly contractors and tradesmen are being asked to prove that they are bona fide and will produce the quality and standards of workmanship that the client requires. Clients are becoming more and more aware of their rights and that there are those out there who are too willing to take clients money while providing shoddy or dangerous work.

Several of the television programmes, which have used hidden cameras to snare those providing sub standard work, have educated clients on the traps to beware of. This is excellent for the majority who are providing honest services. Unfortunately though showing honest tradesmen doing a professional job does not make for

good television. Therefore, unfortunately, all of us working in construction tend to get tarred with the same brush.

Recent construction health and safety legislation has also highlighted the need for clients to engage competent contractors and tradesmen. In fact clients who fail to check competence can find themselves guilty of a criminal act and face the consequences of heavy fines or, in extreme cases, terms of imprisonment.

The Construction Design and Management Regulations 2007 (CDM), now applies to all construction work irrelevant of size or numbers of persons employed. Under the regulations domestic clients are not given duties but their contractors or tradesmen carrying out the work have legal duties. These duties encompass competence, requiring contractors etc to ensure they are competent and persons they employ either directly,

or as self-employed or sub-contractors, are also competent.

The answer is a way of proving our competence and ability. Guidance to clients gives advice on how they can judge competence, and one of the main things they are advised to look out for is membership of a professional body.

Members of the Institute of Construction Management (ICM) can show that they are bone-fide by the very fact that they have been granted membership. Although membership does not infer competence it goes a very long way in allowing clients to sort the wheat from the chaff in selecting a good contractor.

Existing members should use their membership with pride, and new members encouraged to join us because of the benefits that proof of training and honesty that membership confers can lead to. This can include extra work and an improved image of the industry.

CARVED-UP IN STONE

Whilst we are all wondering where the next job is coming from, the government is reported to have spent £1.8 million in fees to architects and consultants over the last five years to provide designs and feasibility studies for a new visitor centre. The cost was recently confirmed by Barbara Follett (architecture minister), in answer to a written question from Lembit Opik (Liberal Democrat). Mr Opik is concerned that there is talk of a temporary centre and that temporary buildings tend to become permanent. English

Heritage, who commissioned the specialists, are reported as saying that the money spent is commensurate with the status and complexity of the project and that the schemes have not materialised due to factors out of their control. Local MP Robert Key, English Heritage & The Department for Culture Media & Sport all back the plan for the centre on the Fargo Plantation site but it is controversially located on a World Heritage site and therefore the National Trust will not agree and they are backed up by the Council for British Archaeology. It would be



nice to think that it can be done ready for 2012 and there are certainly lots of skilled tradespeople out there ready to make a start but I am not over-confident that it will be done, especially since the tunnel scheme was axed – I wonder if there were so many committees when they put the stones up?

Ed.