

Winning Streak for Keystone

The Keystone Group has picked up an impressive 12 industry award wins in the past few months, resulting in a record-breaking year for the Group.

Keystone Group brands Keylite Roof Windows, Keystone Lintels, IG Lintels and Keyfix have all come away victorious at recent industry award events, with multiple nominations and shortlist successes in addition to the wins.

As each entry is judged independently by expert panels of industry leaders this is true recognition of the winning teams, projects and innovations within Keystone Group.

Keylite Roof Windows

- ★ **Best Roofing System or Product 2021**
Build IT Awards
- ★ **Roofing Supplier of the Year 2021**
BMJ Industry Awards
- ★ **Supplier of the Year 2021**
Builders' Merchants Awards
- ★ **Joinery Supplier of the Year 2022**
Fortis Building & Timber Conference
Supplier Awards
- ★ **Best Building Fabric Product 2022**
Housebuilder Product Awards

IG Lintels

- ★ **Supplier of the Year 2022**
Bradfords Awards for Excellence

Keyfix

- ★ **Best Site Product 2022**
Housebuilder Product Awards
- ★ **Manufacturing Innovation 2022**
Made in Northern Ireland Awards
- ★ **Construction Product Innovation 2022**
Irish Construction Excellence Awards

Keystone Lintels

- ★ **Heavyside Supplier of the Year 2021**
BMJ Industry Awards
- ★ **Supplier of the Year 2022**
Buildbase Awards
- ★ **Civils & Groundworks Supplier of the Year 2022**
Fortis Building & Timber Conference
Supplier Awards

“It’s fantastic to see our service and product innovations being recognised and celebrated by the industry.”

Sean Og Coyle

Commercial Director, Keystone Group



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Prospering Together

If we were to look back at the last period of ‘normal trading conditions,’ we would have to go back to before the Ukrainian conflict, pre the pandemic and pre-Brexit. What these last few years have taught us all is that the UK and Irish construction industry is resilient, robust, agile and adaptable. So, what have the last twelve months looked like at Keystone?

At Keylite, we have seen record sales and exceptional demand for our award-winning roof windows. In 2021, like many manufacturers, this prompted us to introduce allocation to ensure their available capacity was shared fairly across our loyal Keylite supplier base.

We were able to ensure all customers received an allocation at least equal to historic sales levels, and we ensured partnering merchants received higher allocation levels to enable them to grow and take advantage of the strong market demand. This resulted in Keylite’s highest ever year of trading.

At our Keylite manufacturing site, we significantly increased production output to meet this additional demand, and, the good news is that customer allocation has ended, lead times have returned to normal and stocks for the UK and Ireland markets are in a healthy position.

From a Lintels perspective, 2021 was a strong year with volumes up c.10% on the same period in 2020. The challenge will be to understand whether this sales growth will continue, or level off in terms of demand, as the world returns to some sort of normality.

Access to raw material steel has improved and our finished goods stock holding is getting back

to pre-pandemic levels. Indeed, we are looking to increase both the breadth and depth of our stocks to further improve the availability of lintels to both merchants and builders.

For the remainder of 2022, there is an understandable level of concern from both the trade and merchants. Inflation is taking hold and industry analysts are revising down their growth forecasts, with RMI in particular reduced. We all also continue to face the ongoing challenges of recruitment and changing work patterns and expectations.

These continually evolving times have made us all review and improve the robustness of our supply chains and at Keystone Group we are focussed on managing as much material inflation as possible. The effect of the war in Ukraine and additional energy cost increases have had an immediate impact on input costs. However, we remain cautious not to dampen demand and are committed to asking only for what we need, not what we would like.

Whether we see a period of normal trading within the next few years, or whether we continue to demonstrate our agility during these changing conditions and positively adapt to the challenges, both Keystone Group brands will continue to work hard to support our merchant partners to ensure we prosper together.



Matthew King
Sales Director, Keylite Roof Windows



Chris Hemmington-Green
Sales Director, Keystone Lintels and IG Lintels

Senior Appointments at Keystone Group



Stuart Risley
Commercial Director,
Keystone Lintels

Stuart Risley has been promoted to Commercial Director of Keystone Lintels having spent the previous five years as Regional Sales Director for the Northern region.

Stuart joined the business in 2011 as Area Sales Manager for the North West before relocating and taking up the same role in London. In 2016 Stuart was promoted to Regional Sales Director.

On his promotion Stuart said 'I am looking forward to the challenge of this new role and working with our teams at Swadlincote to continue to develop a first class customer service experience. The link between sales, technical, sales order processing and production is vital to driving our communication and offering to our customers.'



Caroline Meredith
Commercial Director,
IG Lintels

Recently Caroline Meredith has been promoted to Commercial Director of IG Lintels in recognition of her contribution to the success of the Keystone business and to the wider construction industry.

Having commenced her tenure with IG Lintels in 1979 as an office junior, Caroline has steadily advanced in her career progressing to management, senior management and now moving to a senior leadership role. This is a critical role for IG and Caroline is a pivotal member of the Senior Leadership Team who will shape the future of this highly successful team.

On her promotion Caroline said 'I am delighted that my contribution to the business has been recognised. I am thoroughly excited by my new challenge and the opportunity it offers. It is an absolute honour and pleasure to have earned the privilege of leading the IG team as we progress towards a new phase of growth and development for the business.'



Orlagh Bibby
Marketing Manager,
Keylite Roof Windows

In January this year, Orlagh Bibby joined Keylite as Marketing Manager. Orlagh is a Chartered Marketer with over thirteen years of experience in marketing, primarily within the engineering, construction and logistic sectors.

In her previous role, Orlagh worked at one of Europe's leading distributors, Distrelec Group, where she was Head of Marketing at its Manchester base.

On joining, Orlagh said: "One thing that attracted me to Keystone Group was its ambition, culture and progressiveness. As a marketer, my passion comes from getting into the hearts and minds of customers, and I wanted my next career move to be within a company that believes in the power of the brand, nurtures it and generates profitable growth from it."



Leah Coleman
Marketing Manager,
Keystone & IG Lintels

Earlier in the year, Leah Coleman joined the Group as Marketing Manager for Keystone Lintels and IG Lintels. An experienced marketer, Leah brings with her eighteen years of experience within the construction and engineering sectors.

In her previous role, Leah worked at Ischebeck Titan, where she was the Group Marketing Manager at its base in Burton. Here, Leah transformed a fledgling marketing practice into a fully developed discipline within the company.

On the appointment, Leah said: "I'm really excited to have the autonomy to build new marketing plans into the business, develop strong relationships with key clients, and support the team in bringing out the Keystone message".



Jemma Ison
Group Sustainability Manager,
Keystone Group

Keystone has appointed Jemma Ison as Group Sustainability Manager to help build decarbonisation into all business operations.

Jemma, who has been with the Group for five years, has played an integral part in developing Keystone's sustainability strategy, which is based on three key sustainability pillars: 'Our Nature', 'Our Resources' and 'Our People'.

In her new role, Jemma has been invited to join the NHBC Foundation Expert Panel and also to work with BSI to support the development of sustainability criteria for construction materials.

Jemma says: "I am extremely passionate about my new role and am fully focused on helping the business achieve Net Zero in line with our Sustainability Strategy".

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Going from Strength to Strength

Chadwicks Group is Ireland's leading builders' merchants and home improvement specialist, with over 40 branches across the country. We talk with Patrick Moore, Category Director for Chadwicks about the growth and success of the Group.



Tell us a bit about Chadwicks and your role there?



Chadwicks is currently the largest building material, timber, plumbing and heating, hardware and steel provider across Ireland. Our brand ethos sees us consistently striving to offer the widest range of products at the best value for our customers, to offer a breadth of solutions suited to their building needs.

As Commercial Director, I am responsible for developing and implementing the Group's commercial strategies. My role involves preparing the business for new opportunities and ensuring we are equipped to keep up with our customers' ever-changing needs. We are continuously challenged with finding solutions for the construction sector which cover sustainability, value for money, and ease of use, so it is imperative for us to have unrivalled market knowledge.

“Chadwicks Group has been working with Keystone for many years. The relationship between us is unique as it has been a great supporter of our business.”

Much of my role is working alongside the wider team to ensure we are prepared for new and emerging material trends. I take great pride in maintaining relationships with our supply chain partners and wider team network. I get a lot of enjoyment from working closely with the Chadwicks team, which is committed to driving excellence in all aspects of the business.

Working alongside the Chadwicks Category Managers, we are tasked with ensuring the correct product stock is available for any customer that may walk through our doors. This requires seamless collaboration between the commercial team and the other core parts of the business including marketing, price book, operations, sales, IT and finance.



How is Chadwicks adapting to the opportunities presented online and how does this impact traditional merchandising?

Over the last few years, the building industry has seen an increased uptake in the use of online shopping platforms. This is an area that Chadwicks is particularly passionate about. We recently launched an online portal as the first step into online merchandising, which aims to improve how we work with our customers.

Our entire catalogue is now readily available at the click of a button. We are excited to continue our developments in digitalisation with the ambition of being the market leader within the space.

Chadwicks is over 200 years old. What has been the secret behind the success of this great company?

Our customer-first approach. Everything we do has the customer in mind. This, married with the relationships we have with suppliers is the foundation of our success. Working closely with both is integral to the business across the board. We are present in more communities in Ireland than any other builders' merchant and pride ourselves on our commitment to the localities in which we serve.

Through our branch network and strong relationships with the teams nationwide, we can easily source products and materials and meet customers' needs quickly and efficiently. Customers can also be sure they are benefiting from unrivalled knowledge and expertise, as all Chadwicks colleagues undergo regular product training to always provide best-in-class service.

What challenges has Chadwicks faced over the last 18 months and how have you worked with suppliers to overcome these challenges?

Even though the market has been faced with challenging issues such as Brexit over the past number of years, I am pleased to say that we have seen very little supply chain disruption thanks to careful strategic planning and the work coordinated by our host of dedicated teams. We placed a significant emphasis on remaining agile as we navigated through the pandemic, and with the full commitment of the entire team, we have continued to ensure that our customers consistently experience superior service.

The market has also changed quite dramatically in recent times with the challenges surrounding Brexit, material shortages, logistic issues and price inflation. Fortunately, we are best placed in the market to meet these challenges and manage the situation with minimal disruption for our customers.

What does Keystone offer you as a supplier and how is this relationship different?

Chadwicks Group has been working with Keystone for many years. The relationship between us is unique as it has been a great supporter of our business as both a supplier and customer. We have worked together through many changes in the market and look forward to continuing this special relationship for years to come.

“ We have worked with Keystone through many changes in the market and look forward to continuing this special relationship for years to come.”

What does the future hold for Chadwicks?

We have a positive view of the remainder of the year and into 2023. High demand for housing and energy-efficient retrofits will continue to fuel strong sales of construction materials across the country. At Chadwicks, we see this demand as an opportunity to showcase the breadth of our product ranges across the country, no matter how big or small the project is.

Chadwicks has a long history of helping the construction industry select the right materials to get the job done, and we will continue to focus on providing the best value for customers coupled with an unrivalled product range.

While we will continue to see challenges throughout the industry, we firmly believe that Chadwicks Group will continue to navigate these as efficiently and effectively as possible, while continuing to go from strength to strength.



Keylite's Big USP



At Keylite, we strive to provide added-value product enhancements to help merchants drive sales. Colin Wells, Head of Technical at Keylite, explains why our **Integrated Expanding Thermal Collar** comes fitted into each and every one of our roof windows as standard.



In June this year, revisions to Approved Document L stipulated new homes in England must produce around 30 per cent less net carbon emissions, and existing homes will be subject to higher standards when it comes to added extensions and thermal upgrades, all in a step towards net zero carbon building in 2025.

Following the changes, housebuilders and contractors are looking for ways in which their builds can remain compliant, sustainable and deliver optimum levels of wellbeing for occupants. This undoubtedly has seismic repercussions on merchants, with many asked to advise on products that best help achieve new Part L requirements.

Innovation is at the heart of what we do at Keylite, so we undertook market research that showed that 97% of roof windows are installed without a thermal collar, resulting in a greater chance of heat loss. After our findings, we took responsibility for thermally insulating every one of our Keylite Roof Windows by offering our unique Integrated Expanding Thermal Collar at no extra cost.

“ The thermal collar was recognised as ‘Best Building Fabric Product’ at the 2022 Housebuilder Product Awards and ‘Best Roofing System or Product’ at the 2021 Build It Awards – accolades we are extremely proud of.”



This patented thermal collar comes integrated into all Keylite Roof Windows as standard and expands to fill and fully insulate the gap around the frame of the window to help eliminate condensation and cold bridging. It also improves air tightness, Psi Values for SAP and helps achieve Approved Document L recommendations concerning thermal performance – making it a great selling point for our merchant customers.

Keylite Roof Windows are always in demand, but we are seeing more and more housebuilders and larger installers moving to take advantage of the built-in thermal collar, making it our ‘Big USP’. Indeed, the Integrated Expanding Thermal Collar was one of the key features that persuaded Taylor Wimpey to move supplier and insist on all roof windows being Keylite.

There are huge benefits when it comes to installation too. As the collar is already integrated into the roof window profile, installers can fit with a 20mm gap on-site and then simply pull the tab on the window to release the expandable thermal collar, which then bridges the gap between frame and building envelope. This not only saves time and cost, but also creates more thermally efficient and comfortable homes.

The Integrated Expanding Thermal Collar was patent approved in March 2021, meaning Keylite Roof Windows is the only manufacturer to offer such an innovation. In fact, the thermal collar was recognised as ‘Best

Building Fabric Product’ at the 2022 Housebuilder Product Awards and ‘Best Roofing System or Product’ at the 2021 Build It Awards – accolades we are extremely proud of.

In order to make houses more comfortable and energy-efficient, products should be designed and specified with optimum thermal comfort in mind, which is why we offer our unique Integrated Expanding Thermal Collar as standard on all roof windows, at no extra cost.

For more information on Keylite’s Integrated Expanding Thermal Collar, please visit keyliterateofwindows.com/the-gap, call **01283 200 158** or email info@keyliteuk.com.

“ Keylite’s patented thermal collar comes integrated into all Keylite Roof Windows as standard and expands to fill and fully insulate the gap around the frame of the window to help eliminate condensation and cold bridging.”



SNS Stand the Test of Time

SNS enjoys a strong presence in the housebuilding sector, particularly within the steel and concrete lintel market.

We chat with Michael Brown, Managing Director at SNS.



Building on its time-honoured principles of getting it right for the customer and holding a comprehensive but focussed product range, SNS Building Products is “keeping the builder building” in the central south, offering a reliable delivery service or collection from its trade centres in Reading, Berkshire and Farnborough in Hampshire.

SNS is approaching 50 years of trading. What do you believe is the key to the success of the SNS brand?

SNS evolved by meeting the needs of the market. Customers find that whilst general merchants are often a great one-stop shop, they don't always keep a comprehensive depth of stock of any particular range of building products.

Originally named Southern Nail Supplies, my father left his employment at the local builders' merchant in 1974 to set up a business selling primarily steel nails, which was what his customers were finding a challenge to procure at that time.

As the business grew, other associated product ranges were added, helping grow the business by meeting the needs of the market rather than following the pack of other mainstream merchants and generalising.



Now, whenever we take on a key product range, we aim to hold a wide range and decent stockholding to enable us to gain our customers' trust and have them coming back again and again. As a current example, who else stocks over 35 different sizes of concrete padstones, other than SNS?

The company's strapline is 'keeping the builder building'. How does this capture the culture, identity and personality of your brand?

As a business, we're very passionate about putting the customer first and we have an excellent team who work hard to make things happen. At today's labour rates, site downtime is very costly, so we always aim to deliver next day, in full, on time, enabling our housebuilder customers to keep their projects moving forward.

During the last two years, this has meant continually changing our approach to suit the challenges of material shortages and longer manufacturer lead times. We're very considerate of our manufacturer and supplier relationships, working well together to form win-win partnerships. All this forms a culture of transparency.



You have great partnerships with builders. Tell us about the Berkeley Homes project and how this makes you especially proud of SNS?

Berkeley Homes is a great example of a long-standing relationship at SNS, going back over 30 years! This has been built up by delivering a reliable delivery service and efficient back-office management for material scheduling.

This has enabled us to secure well over £1 million worth of masonry support business at their prestigious Huntley Wharf project in central Reading and also their extensive Green Park Village development. Dedicated staff are assigned to manage these projects, which gives our customers professional support and continuity of supply by coordinating supplier orders and site deliveries.

How did Keystone collaborate with SNS on this project?

Keystone Group has been an excellent partner in developing our relationship with Berkeley Homes, working closely with technical and site teams to deliver a comprehensive masonry support package aligned with the build program.

“Keystone Group has been an excellent partner in developing our relationship with Berkeley Homes.”

The team at Keystone Group have been dedicated to specifying the detailed and accurate solutions to this complex project which comprises several residential tower blocks. The results are very impressive to see!

What is your outlook for the remainder of the year into 2023?

Having had a good start to the year, the demand appears to be holding up and the majority of our customer base is stacked out with business for the remainder of this year, so trade continues to look healthy.

Raw material increases are having a slowing effect on the supply chain, so we are always on the lookout for fresh sources of supply to ensure we are “keeping the builder building”.

We continue to recruit new staff to help us grow and if we can get hold of the stock, we can sell it! We look forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary in 2024!



Secret to Success

Lords Group Trading started as a hardware store in 1985 with its first store in the West London village of Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire. The business has grown significantly over the last 35 years to over 45 sites and over 880 colleagues. Shanker Patel, CEO at Lords discusses what principles he believes are behind the company's success.



Tell us a bit about the history of Lords and how you have got to where you are today?



Lords is a family business, and this familial culture is at the core of everything we do. When I first started there were six of us in total. We have virtually carried out every operational function in our business apart from driving an HGV!

We have grown organically for 25 years and then in the last ten years through strategic acquisitions as well as organic growth.

Our secret to our success is simply down to our investment in our three Ps. This is an investment in our People, our Plant and our Premises. We have always re-invested in our business in these three key areas and over the years the dividends have come in the form of growth of our business.

We believe that business should be carried out ethically with a focus on two key stakeholders, these being our Colleagues and Customers. If we keep both of these stakeholders happy, then everyone else including shareholders and suppliers will also be satisfied.

Lords has been trading since 1985 and has grown into a diversified business employing over 880 people from 45 locations in five divisions. What are your plans for the future of this great business?

We plan to continue growing as we have done over the last 35 years. Our current aim is to reach a turnover of £500m and we are confident that we will be able to reach this within our stated time frame of 2024. Beyond that, I am confident that we will find an appropriate and ambitious further target of growth as it is part of our DNA.

Tell us about your lifelong ambition of listing the business on the AIM market and why this was an important goal for you?

The ambition was a personal goal of building a business which could list on the public markets. A business that had the professionalism, the performance and the standards required for our new shareholders to believe in us with their investment.

An additional goal was to be able to provide a vehicle in which our colleagues could also be owners. At IPO stage, we gave a gift of free shares to colleagues, which was well-received, along with an opportunity for them to invest in the business. The uptake of this was very strong, reflecting the team culture we have built over the years.

Finally, it is important for me to demonstrate that family businesses can thrive in the public markets. I have seen this actioned successfully in other countries and it has been a personal desire to ensure that our business has a sustainable long-term platform to grow beyond my tenure at the helm.

Our listing on AIM in July 2021 has been a culmination of many years of hard work, perseverance and patience.





What does your business look for in a key supplier and what is different about how Keystone Lintels and Keylite support your business?

Partnership is the main feature that we look for in a supplier. A business that does not treat us as a distributor, but more of a partner with a focus on mutual commercial benefit. Keystone and Keylite have taken this approach with our business and it shows in the relationship that they have developed with our team and, in particular, with our branches. The trading happens in the branches and this is what we have noticed about Keystone Group, a commercial partnership rather than a transactional relationship.



What do you consider to be the critical challenges facing the merchenting industry today?

Like our peers, we are facing some well-documented labour shortages within our industry, which is not the first choice for many young adults entering the workplace. However, we are using our focus on familial culture to attract new talent.

In addition, we have product shortages in some areas of the business which has made operating in the current environment a challenge for our colleagues and customers.

Furthermore, like other businesses in our sector we are facing rising overheads with not only energy costs but a considerable increase in our fuel costs. Longer-term we will be facing challenges in reducing our carbon footprint and this will be difficult without support from the government in assisting our industry in investing in green initiatives. We have spent time as a management team planning our sustainability strategy as this is a core focus for our business.

What is your outlook for the remainder of the year into 2023?

We are predominantly focused on the RMI market, which has continued to show strong resilience to inflationary pressures. We see 2022 being strong for RMI predicated on house price confidence and housing transactions.

2023 may well see a slow down if inflationary pressures continue to squeeze householders to the point that it affects RMI, but against that, there are current disruptions which if eased could also see the reduction of these inflationary pressures.

The UK housing and building stock is known to need substantial investment and we do not anticipate longer term that the market will be adversely affected.



Leading the Pack in Lowering Carbon Emissions

Hi-therm+
LINTELS
BY
Keystone

Five times more thermally efficient than standard lintels, Jonathan Fee, Head of Technical, examines how Keystone's Hi-therm+ Lintels help achieve the latest Part L targets, and work towards the Climate Bill in Northern Ireland, whilst presenting an increased turnover and margin opportunity for merchants.

“Keystone’s Hi-therm+ Lintels have given us the opportunity of winning new lintel orders. Once our customers see how easy they are to install and how they help with the thermal performance of a building, they sell themselves. The support from Keystone is also a massive bonus and there is always expertise there should we need additional support to get a sale over the line. It also shows our customers that we are doing our utmost to help and save them money across their projects.”

Paul Morris Oswestry Branch Manager, TG Builders Merchants Ltd.

In the latest changes to Part L, a mandatory Fabric Energy Efficiency Standard (FEES) has been introduced in addition to the original Target Emission Rate, which measures CO².

The FEES target puts focus on the thermal performance of a building’s fabric and the materials and components that make these elements up. Lintels are in most cases a significant thermal bridge, meaning they can have a significant impact on the overall thermal performance of a building.

Part L is seeking to reduce carbon emissions by around 31% and in Northern Ireland, with the passing of the new Climate Bill in March 2022, the process has begun to catch up with the other regions in these islands. The framework document, ‘Energy Strategy – Path to Net Zero Energy’, published in December 2021, set out the plans for the next decade and what changes should be anticipated across all sectors. These include:

- 40% reduction in carbon emissions for all new domestic building and for new non-domestic buildings a 15% reduction over current standards
- Tightened minimum fabric standards for both new domestic and commercial buildings
- Maintain the SAP 2009 and SBEM version 4 standards
- Removal of the default air permeability test score of 15 m³/m²/h @ 50 Pa
- New standards to be implemented three months from publication

These changes and reduction targets should see specifiers looking for new, more energy efficient alternatives in order to meet the expectations of the Building Regulations. This is where Keystone’s Hi-therm+ Lintels can help.

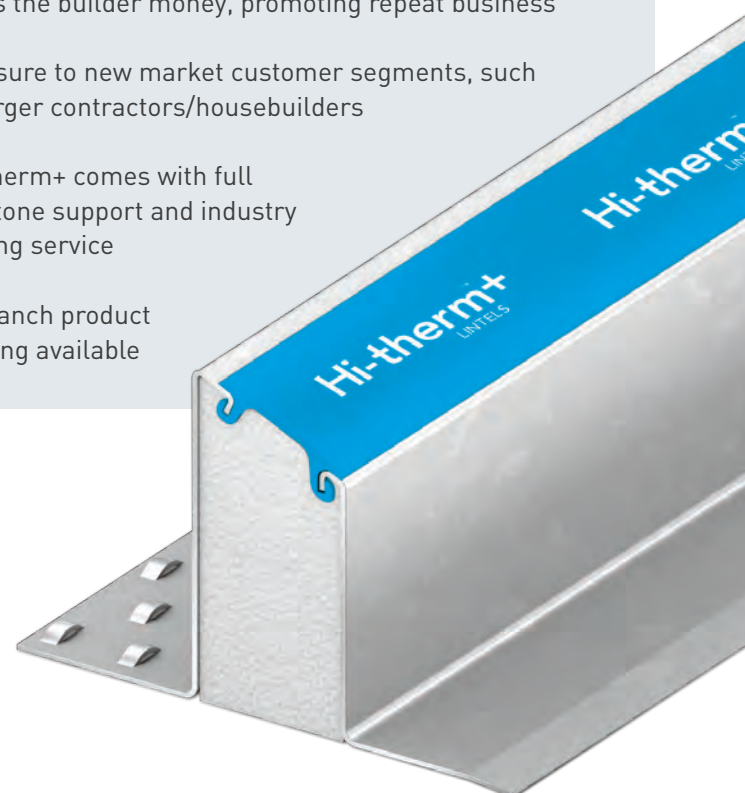
Hi-therm+ provides builders with the credible solution to achieve the latest targets by reducing thermal bridging at the junctions of windows and doors. Easy and cost effective, Hi-therm+ offers the simplicity of a one piece, structurally superior top hat design, creating stability during the building process, unlike a two-part lintel solution. Available in a wider range and longer lengths, Hi-therm+ provides greater choice and buildability.

What’s more, Hi-therm+ offers a cost-effective solution to lowering carbon emissions within SAP, offering significant savings compared to other popular alternatives. For example, in a comparative case study for a house type, using Hi-therm+ would incur less than 20% of the cost of increasing the cavity width by 50mm for the same saving in CO². These CO² savings are important within SAP because they give flexibility for compliance in situations where other built details are not meeting the standards in Appendix R.

For more information on Keystone’s Hi-therm+ Lintels, please call your local Area Sales Manager or visit keystonelintels.com/hi-therm-lintels.

Hi-therm+ Benefits for Merchants

- BBA approved ‘quality’ product
- Cost effective solution to help meet the SAP requirement for the site
- Changes to Part L regulations has a heavier focus on thermal bridging
- Increased margins to the merchant over standard lintel sales
- Creates options for the builder/end-user
- Helps to obtain cost savings for the builder/end-user on the overall project
- Smaller cavity size may increase the overall quantity of houses per development
- Higher EPC rating for the builder may be achieved, potentially helping to sell completed properties quicker, and at an increased price against another developer
- Saves the builder money, promoting repeat business
- Exposure to new market customer segments, such as larger contractors/housebuilders
- Hi-Therm+ comes with full Keystone support and industry leading service
- In-branch product training available



Adapt and Evolve to Drive Change

Lakhvir Sanghera is Commercial Director at Travis Perkins Group and offers valuable insight into life as a woman in construction.



Lakhvir Sanghera

Commercial Director
Travis Perkins Group



Tell us about yourself?

I grew up in the Midlands, surrounded by a loving extended family and I am one of five siblings. I joined Barclays Bank at the age of 18 as a trainee, completing my degree and ACCA accounting qualification with them.

Family is hugely important to me, I live in Buckinghamshire with my husband and two beautiful children. I have a great family support network that allows me to balance my professional and personal commitments.

My current role for the last 18 months is Commercial Director for Travis Perkins, responsible for category management, supply chain, pricing and marketing. I have been with the Travis Perkins Group for 11 years and have worked across Commercial and Finance Teams in Wickes Group and most recently Travis Perkins.

I'm a qualified accountant and love working in both finance and commercial, as I can combine my finance background with the world of commercial.

How did your career path take you into the construction industry?

Barclays was great as it allowed me to gain a vast range of experience whilst working with diverse teams across the UK, Western Europe and

ABSA Bank in South Africa. There were opportunities to travel to various countries in the roles too, which I loved!

I had both of my children whilst working with Barclays and they had great family policies, which supported all colleagues. Juggling a young family, I decided to leave Barclays in 2011 and set up my own business as a self employed contractor.

Travis Perkins Group was my first contract back in 2011, heading up the Commercial Finance Team for Wickes. The contract was extended and after two years the Managing Director offered me a great opportunity to become a permanent employee. I loved the contracting life and the flexibility; however, the role was moving into the Commercial Team responsible for sourcing (domestic and far east), range changes and merchandising, which I saw as an opportunity for me to develop my skills and further my career.

Moving from banking into construction was daunting initially, I was definitely stepping out of my comfort zone. I quickly learned that skills are transferable across any industry, and while it felt uncomfortable, I thrived. From the start, I loved the construction industry, this was helped with Travis Perkins Group allowing me to grow, develop and drive change at pace. Merchandising can be a traditional industry, sometimes old school; however, as the world changes around us and customer needs change, it is key that we continue to challenge our thinking, be ambitious and ensure we remain relevant to customers. Even in changing times, Travis Perkins continues to



lead the industry across digital, service and value; really thinking about future customer needs and how we adapt. This was a real attraction for me to the Group.

I have been very fortunate to work for a business that promotes development and progression for all colleagues regardless of gender or past experiences. Due to the size of the Group, I have also had many opportunities to move across different businesses and functions at ease.

What steps does the industry have to take to ensure career success for women in this sector?

The industry is making great progress in challenging the norm and attracting women into the industry – over the last 11 years, I have definitely seen progress and a changing culture. I think there is a lot more to be done and as leaders in the industry we all need to play our part to be the change we want to see.

In Travis Perkins, we now have industry-leading family policies. Personally, I am so pleased to have played a part in driving this change for all parents. To put this into context, maternity leave has gone from six weeks full pay to twenty six weeks full pay, followed by thirteen weeks statutory pay. Paternity pay has also gone from one week statutory to two weeks full pay. This is a significant improvement for a working parent and will help to retain and attract top talent to the Group.

There are numerous other initiatives including the 30% Club, which offers mentoring for female talent. As we continue to see the industry evolve and see more women in senior positions, importantly this provides role models for other women so they can progress and develop their careers in construction. We need to continue an ongoing review of all areas including inclusion, diversity, wellbeing, recruitment, training and development that will continue to support successful careers for all colleagues.

“I have been very fortunate to work for a business that promotes development and progression for all colleagues regardless of gender.”

What advice would you give to young females starting their careers?

Believe in yourself and give every opportunity a go, as you will always learn something. I don't believe there is any role or industry in which a female cannot progress, so always keep your options open. I fell into the construction industry by chance through my contracting work, however, before that it had not been a natural consideration when working in the banking world.

Identify a great mentor that can support you and your development, they can provide excellent advice for all aspects of your professional development. Every day is a new opportunity, treat every day as a learning day.

What are your goals for the next five years?

I'm a big believer in working hard and new opportunities will come your way. During most of my career, I have been fortunate enough that the next role has come my way as I have focused on doing a great job in my current position.

In the next five years, I'm looking forward to continuing to learn, develop and hope that I am continuing to make a difference in whatever role I am in!



Success Breeds Success

Bradfords is a building supplies company with over 40 branches in the South West of the UK. We chat with Cath Mullin, Regional Director at Bradfords Building Supplies about diversity in construction.



Cath Mullin

Regional Director
Bradfords Building Supplies



Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I have been in merchandising for 25 years and started my career in 1997 as a management trainee for Travis Perkins. I've always enjoyed being involved and hands-on, which is what the programme offered. Spending time in different areas of the business, yard, counter and sales, my career began to excel when I was given the opportunity to become a sales representative. It is this role that absolutely developed my confidence.

They say that success breeds success and I truly enjoyed my time on the road, meeting customers and working with them on their projects. Soon after I then became a Regional Sales Manager and at the age of 34, I was lucky enough to be promoted to Sales Director. It was at this time I realised that to truly deliver fantastic sales development you must be operationally efficient. I then made the decision to move from sales to operations.

For the last three years, I have been managing the South region of branches for Bradfords as a Regional Director. I have thoroughly enjoyed every single role I have had in my career, but I believe my current role is where I can add the most value in both sales and operations.



“If you recruit the best person with the right attitude, who wants to learn and improve, then regardless of being a woman, you will always have the talent from within who are driven and ambitious.”



How did your career path take you into the construction industry?

I had very much planned on going to university to study Business, but I spotted an advert for the management trainee programme. I wasn't necessarily interested in merchandising at the time, but the management trainee programme offered me the ability to gain an HND qualification in Business and getting paid to learn appealed to me.

I soon fell in love with merchandising, mainly because of the customers and my colleagues. My mum wasn't overly pleased at the time, but today she is very proud of my achievements and how far I have come in the industry.

What steps does the industry have to take to ensure career success for women in this sector?

The key factor here is recruitment. If you recruit the best people with the right attitude, who want to learn and improve, then regardless of being a woman, you will always have the talent from within who are driven and ambitious.

We need to make our recruitment more attractive and ensure that there are opportunities for people to progress within the same business. It can be very daunting coming into this industry but if we are warm,

welcoming and show a vested interest in how we can help an individual develop then in turn their confidence will grow, and those opportunities will appear.

What advice would you give to women starting their careers in construction?

Be confident, ask questions, and go the extra mile. Be committed and conscientious in every task you are asked to do. Show initiative and get involved.

What does the future hold for you?

I am truly happy in my current role; it is so varied and full of interesting challenges, which keeps me very occupied and engaged. However, I would like to continue to develop my career and still have many more years ahead of me to explore new roles and opportunities!

“Be confident, ask questions, and go the extra mile. Be committed and conscientious in every task you are asked to do. Show initiative and get involved.”

Building a Career in Construction

Caroline Meredith, Commercial Director for IG Lintels, discusses how she got started in the industry and what advice she would give to other women looking to start a career in construction.



Caroline Meredith

Commercial Director
IG Lintels



Tell us about yourself?

I was born in Cwmbran and have lived there all my life. I have two sons, one works in haematology as a Biomedical Scientist, and the other works for a Formula 1 team as a software developer.

I love baking and cooking in my spare time, and as I love my food so much, I also like to keep fit, or I should say – I need to keep fit. This has gone by the wayside over the past two years and my aim now is to get back to my pre-Covid fitness level.

How did your career path take you into the construction industry?

I left school at the age of seventeen and was offered two jobs, one as a trainee chef and the other as an office junior at IG Lintels. After weighing up both options I decided to accept the IG Lintels offer.

I was employed in November 1979 as an office junior. The first computer was introduced into the office around 1980 and that's when I started to process sales orders. The computer was so slow when it was originally installed that I would work weekends to catch up with the backlog of orders.



Over the next seven years, I progressed to the Sales Office Team Leader before going on maternity leave. After my first son was born, I decided to leave work to concentrate on raising a family. Two years later my second son arrived.

The late '80s and early '90s had been tough with the high interest rates, so in 1994 I returned to IG Lintels working in the technical admin team before moving back to the role of SOP Team Leader and taking on credit control as part of my role.

Over the years I progressed into management and as part of my development, I found that coaching and NLP training was invaluable and would thoroughly recommend it.



“ In 2006 IG Lintels became part of the Keystone Group and over the past sixteen years I have thoroughly enjoyed my job. Keystone has supported me with my professional development and helped me achieve my career goals. ”

In 2006 IG Lintels became part of the Keystone Group and over the past sixteen years I have thoroughly enjoyed my job. Keystone has supported me with my professional development and helped me achieve my career goals.

What steps does the industry have to take to ensure career success for women in this sector?

I know that a lot of effort is going towards making the construction industry more accessible for women, with lots of initiatives to increase diversity and tackle the gender gap.

I think there may be preconceived ideas about the roles available for women in the industry. From bricklaying and surveying, engineering, customer service, finance and administration, if the variety of roles were promoted more, then this may attract more women into construction.

I have seen a shift over the years, and we have more women in certain roles than we did thirty years ago, such as Technical Engineers, Managers, ASMs, Directors and CEOs. Mindsets have changed and it's great to see.

What advice would you give to young females starting their careers?

Never stop learning; there's always something new you can learn every day. Self-improvement is an endless task, and you will reap the benefits.

Always be willing to take on any task and always do your best at whatever comes your way. A 'can do' attitude will serve you well with your organisation and your customers. Be willing to listen to your colleagues and consider others' opinions, it's always good to keep an open mind.

Believe in yourself and you can achieve anything you want to. One of my favourite quotes by Henry Ford is: 'Whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you're right.'

What are your goals for the next five years?

As I'm a firm believer in progression and succession planning, I will be supporting individuals with their career aspirations within the organisation. We have so much talent within our business and it's important to support them with their development. This will secure a strong and experienced workforce and I can't wait to see what the future holds for the Keystone Group.

“ Always be willing to take on any task and always do your best at whatever comes your way. A 'can do' attitude will serve you well with your organisation and your customers. ”

The much awaited **BLOCKBUSTER** is back!

Keystone and IG Lintels 'Movies from Home 2' offers branch employees the chance to win fabulous movie prizes. The idea is simple, tell us about live projects in your area and each lead will gain an entry into our quarterly prize draws for fabulous movie related prizes.



What's up for grabs?

Prizes include:

- 65" Sky Glass TV
- Home Movie Projector & Screen
- Cinema Family Passes plus many more...

Each lead = an entry into our grand prize draw for a 65" Glass TV. Additional spot prizes must be won.

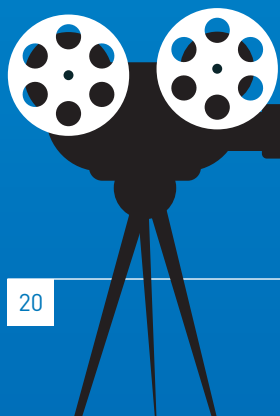
Watch out for our seasonal box sets at Halloween, Christmas and Valentines!

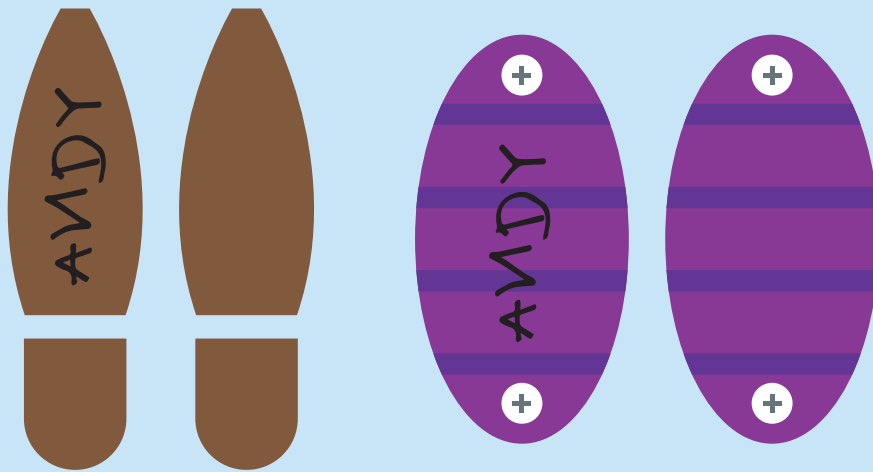
More leads = more sales and the chance to win



Less really = **More!**

Leads = **E**nquiries = **S**chedules = **S**ales





No lead gets left behind

Reach for the sky!...

And be entered into our Keystone Lintels 'Movies from Home' prize draw for the chance to win fantastic prizes including:

65" Sky Glass TV / Home Movie Projector & Screen / Cinema Family Passes

Along with the chance to WIN one or more of our many spot prizes.

Keystone Lintels 'Movies from Home' offers branch employees the chance to win fabulous movie prizes to enjoy from the comfort of their very own home. keystonelintels.com/movies for more details.



Bringing the Bling to Merchunting

We speak with Andy Williamson, UK Commercial Director, SIG and Master of the Worshipful Company of Builders Merchants (WCoBM).



Andy Williamson is currently UK Commercial Director at SIG, having joined the business in June 2020 as part of a fresh management team intent on rebuilding a major brand within the sector. Andy has previously held roles as Group MD of IKO and Director of Digby Stone as part of a long history serving the construction and merchant industry.

Tell us about your career progression.

I am proud to say I am a salesperson by trade, having sold building materials back in 1992 after leaving school with no idea what I was going to do. Following school, I joined NatWest and after a few other roles in banking, I started selling Solvite and UniBond for Henkel. My first management role came when I joined Yale locks, where I set up a dedicated team specifically to serve the merchant sector and I have not looked back since. I very quickly linked up with the BMF and attended many industry events including my first conference back in 2000. I have always believed that it is important to give back and fully participate, so I was very honoured to be elected as a Non-Exec Director of the BMF in 2005.

Following Yale, I joined IKO as Sales Director in Feb 2007 and took over as Group MD in November 2012, leaving the business in July 2018.

What advice would you give to others starting out in this sector?

Recently people are asking me this question and it means I'm getting old... I also have no idea why anyone would want to ask me! That said, if I were to give advice it would be these three things. Firstly, give back. Help others not because you think you will get something from it, but for the good of the industry.

Secondly, work hard. Hard work is the key to success, not how well educated you are or whom you know. This is a diverse and inclusive industry in which anyone can succeed. And finally, have fun and enjoy yourself. This sector is a fantastic place with fantastic people, so make sure you enjoy what you do and always have a laugh.



What is the Worshipful Company of Builders Merchants (WCoBM) and what does it stand for?

WCoBM is one of the 110 livery companies in the City of London. The livery companies' existence can be traced back to the 12th century when groups of people working in the same craft came together to regulate competition within their trade and maintain high standards.

Today livery companies are just as pertinent as they have always been, however, their focus, whilst keeping the same ethos, has changed to promoting and supporting their trade through encouraging fellowship and promoting and supporting education and training. The livery companies have a huge charitable arm, donating over £40M per year to charities, both in the city and further afield.

You are the current Master of the WCoBM. What are the responsibilities of this prestigious role?

I took over as Master of the WCoBM in October and as the title of this feature suggests, it is very much about bringing the bling! As Master, my main responsibility is to promote the art of a builders' merchant to as many people as I can, both in and out of our industry.

“As Master, my main responsibility is to promote the art of a builders' merchant to as many people as I can, both in and out of our industry.”

The Master is a huge honour and is quite humbling as it is your peers who nominate you for the role. I will hold the role of Master for one year and during that time I will attend over 100 industry events, within the City of London and further afield. So far in my tenure, I have been honoured to lay a cross at the City of London's Garden of Remembrance at a ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral with the Lord Mayor of London; I have visited the Battle of Britain Memorial flight; I've hosted a lunch and presented

awards to industry, military, and city recipients, as well as attended several fantastic dinners including quite a few with the Lord Mayor at Mansion House in London.

As Master, you are also responsible for the running of the livery company and managing its employees, of which we have three, so it is a bit like running a small business in my spare time whilst still doing my day job at SIG.

What is your outlook for the remainder of the year, into 2023?

Having just come through two difficult years of the pandemic I am sure we all thought things would start to settle down. However, we find ourselves in the horrific situation of seeing war on our doorstep following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Whilst only a small percentage of finished goods come into the UK market from those affected areas, the knock-on impact on energy costs and availability of earth minerals is creating huge price rises and this in itself could well have an impact on demand.

We are already seeing significant price increases and unfortunately, I think there is more to come as manufacturers' energy hedges start to run out. If energy costs do not soften, this will be challenging. I do think that the market will calm as people become more cautious about their discretionary spending, however, this gives us an opportunity as an industry to look at how we do things.

I believe there could well be a move towards alternative energy sources and building to a better, more energy-efficient standard. This great industry will also come up with new and innovative solutions to help us build better for the future.

“I believe there could well be a move towards alternative energy sources and building to a better, more energy-efficient standard.”



Fun, Interactive Training on a Screen Near You

The Keylite Academy is a fun, interactive, free web-based training portal which allows merchant staff to complete product training at a time and location that best suits them.

According to the Builders Merchants Federation's training division: 'One of the major challenges merchants face today is finding talented people who will fit in with your ethos and produce results.'

Training our merchant partners is a core strategic objective for Keylite, which is why we wanted to survey our customers to better understand the barriers when it came to providing merchant training.

According to our research, 98% of merchants agreed it was important to keep staff up to speed with the latest products and services to help win new customers and convert leads into sales opportunities. However, 87% of merchants did not have time for on-site training and 93% advised that there was a need for merchant staff to train at a pace and place that works for them.

Utilising this insight and with merchants in mind, Keylite has developed a new and exclusive online Merchant Training Portal as part of our Keylite Training Academy. The aim of this portal is to provide our merchant customers with extra support in speaking to customers about Keylite's unique and award-winning innovations, products and services, to help boost sales.

Keylite Academy Modules

Each module in the Keylite Academy is designed to be a fun and light-hearted learning experience to ensure merchant staff come away with all the important information they need to advise end-users in their purchase decision.

The short and easily digestible online learning modules are developed in consultation with merchants to ensure the core learning content meets the needs of the audience:

- | STAGE 1 | STAGE 2 |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Roof Window Overview— Roof Windows— Loft Ladders— Drive for 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">— Roof Window Flashings— Flat Roof Systems— Pitched Roof Systems— Flat Roof Lanterns— Keylite Connect |

As Keylite Academy is free and based online, participants can access the training modules at any time and place, at the total convenience of the individual and wider team.

To get started visit:

keyliteacademy.com/login

The Keylite Academy in 2021

Total Users: **777**

Merchant Groups: **94**

Highest Performing Merchant Group: **Alsford Timber**

Who is Keylite Academy suitable for?

- Business Owners/MDs
- Branch Managers
- Contracts Sales and Specification Teams
- Senior Counter Staff

“Keylite Academy modules are easy to navigate and allow you to learn at your own pace. It’s all packaged together to help give you the tools needed to confidently talk to the customer about Keylite, plug the USPs and hopefully improve on sales!”

Chris Hartley, Myers Building Supplies



To register for the Keylite Academy, speak to your local Area Sales Manager.

Keylite Academy Q&A

We caught up with Mariah Archer, National Account Executive, to understand how Keylite Academy has helped her in her role supporting our merchant partners.



How long have you worked at Keylite?

I’ve worked five years at Keylite.

How has the Keylite Academy helped you in your role?

Keylite Academy has helped me succeed in my role massively. It’s broadened my knowledge on products and company processes, furthermore it’s helped me understand how different aspects of the business work; from technical specification to aftersales, through to health & safety and marketing. Because of this, it’s helped me explore other areas of the business, leading to my promotion in 2021.

How do our merchants benefit from your training on Keylite Academy?

Since taking part in Keylite Academy, I have a wider knowledge of different aspects of the business and our products. This benefits our merchant partners as they can be confident that when they contact me, they will receive a wealth of information and knowledge directly from the person on the end of the phone without being passed from person to person. The Academy is constantly being updated with new information and modules too, further expanding our knowledge.

What modules did you find most useful?

The module I find the most useful is the ‘Roof Window Overview’. It contains information on our USP’s, window systems and combinations and also glazing options and their values which can be particularly useful when speaking with builders, prospective customers, longstanding customers and National House Builders.

Why would you recommend Keylite Academy?

I’d recommend our merchant partners participate in the Academy if they can do so! It’s a great way to learn about our product offerings and product features with great prizes up for grabs too!

“Keylite Academy has been a massive help. This extra knowledge and insight really does build my confidence in the product and in Keylite as a company, which in turn enables us to sell the product, the service and the ethos to our customers!”

Simon Steve Binley Branch Manager, Buildbase Stowmarket

Onsite with Keylite Roof Windows

Modern Luxury at Weirs Wynd

Merchant: Catherwood Construction Materials

David Wilson Homes' stunning new development in Weirs Wynd, Renfrewshire features 102 Keylite Roof Windows, with natural daylight being a huge priority throughout the design of the homes. John Logue, Keylite Sales Manager said: "We are thrilled to have worked alongside long-time partner David Wilson Homes on this project. It's been fantastic seeing this site evolve and how Keylite Roof Windows feature on the different house types, from single installations, combinations and even our Quad-Lite Systems.



Brightening Surrey's Private Wentworth Estate

Merchant: SNS Building Products Ltd

The latest addition to Surrey's exclusive Wentworth Estate is a bespoke family home, designed and built by luxury homes specialist, EAB Homes. Ultra-slim profile aluminium windows, doors and Keylite Roof Windows feature on all aspects of the property, maximising the light that flows throughout the space. Peter Warren, Director at EAB Homes said: "The use of Keylite Roof Windows allowed our architects to let loose on the property design, without having to worry about whether the build would get the ventilation it needs, or whether certain building regs would be covered."



Modern Methods of Construction at Cityglades

Located adjacent to Ditton Meadows and just outside Cambridge city centre, Cityglades, constructed by developer This Land, is an intimate scheme of fourteen two, three and four bedroom homes, designed in a contemporary style. Developer, This Land, wanted to explore modern methods of construction to help create affordable, well-constructed, sustainable homes, built in the most efficient construction timeframe. The highly desirable room in roof system was created by our sister brand, Smartroof Ltd, and features several banks of Keylite Roof Windows to provide natural daylight.



Flannery's Restaurant & Bar

Merchant: Cummins Homevalue

Flannery Restaurant & Bar in the centre of Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo is the culinary dream of owner Trevor Burke. Trevor and his team welcome their guests with a warm 'home from home' feeling, with a Keylite Flat Roof Lantern being at the heart of the room which transforms the restaurant using natural light. We spoke with Builder Earnan from Brian Ivor's Roofing who stated that he is exceptionally pleased with Keylite services and more so their roof lantern products. Earnan has previously installed a number of Keylite Flat Roof Lanterns and would highly recommend them to other roofing specialists.



Onsite with Keystone & IG Lintels

Keystone Helps Create Contemporary Living Spaces at Keelson Yard

Merchant: Parkers Building Supplies

Keelson Yard, Whitstable, comprises of six contemporary apartments and two semi-detached new builds. Keystone Lintel's unique double brick slip feature arch lintel adds character to the entrance of a semi-detached property, an integral and classic feature common with many homes from a Victorian period. Duncan Blackmore the Director at Yellowjack Construction Limited commented "Keystone provided a creative one-piece lintel design solution as an alternative to two singular arches. This saved time and provided an easier install on site. I was really impressed with the quality and consistency achieved".



Energy Efficient Solution for Barton Heath Development

Merchant: C W Berry

Rowland Homes has been specifying Keystone Lintels since 2002, due to product quality and technical expertise. A solution was required that would improve the fabric energy efficiency of homes in their Barton Heath development without affecting the aesthetics of the properties. In 2014, Rowland switched to Hi-therm+ Lintels, a patented combination of a polymer isolator and galvanised steel to bond the internal and external walls. Rowland have since decided to use Hi-therm+ Lintels on all house types, encouraging cost efficiency and thermal efficiency. Neil Hindle, Buyer for Rowland Homes, stated "Hi-therm+ Lintels are a key component in our approach in working towards the government net-zero emissions goals by 2050".



Keystone's Brick Slip Lintels Add Character at Wellington Court Development

Merchant: SNS Building Products

Wellington Court showcases an exclusive collection of eight luxury two- and three-bedroom apartments located in Beaconsfield. The renowned developer Halamar captivates an elegant flow and delicate fusions of old and new design. Keystone's brick slip feature corbelled arch and full arch lintels add character to the main entrance and remarkable penthouse apartment windows leading out onto the balconies. The developer wanted to set a new benchmark living in Buckinghamshire, exemplary offsite craftsmanship was required to expertly achieve key architectural design features. Keystone's pioneering brick slip system ensured quality control standards were maintained throughout the manufacturing process.



IG Lintels Add a Special Touch to McArthurGlen Designer Outlet

Merchant: Civils & Lintels

The £160.0 million McArthurGlen Cannock development has the vision of becoming one of the UK's top designer outlets. Holder Mathias Architects contemporary design applied to traditional architectural forms required IG Lintel's bespoke full arch lintels for high quality shopfronts and feature buildings. For the first phase of 80 retail units, Phoenix Brickwork required IG's bespoke arch lintels, accommodating a range of opening spans between 910mm to 6000mm for ground and first floor shopfront door and window openings. IG's technical team worked closely with Phoenix Brickwork and developed a one-piece lintel design solution taking into consideration loading conditions for each application.



The Dogs...

Keystone Group is now celebrating more industry awards than ever before.



Best Roofing System or Product 2021
Build It Awards



Roofing Supplier of the Year 2021
BMJ Industry Awards



Supplier of the Year 2021
Builders' Merchants Awards



Joinery Supplier of the Year 2022
Fortis Building & Timber Supplier Awards



Best Building Fabric Product 2022
Housebuilder Product Awards



Supplier of the Year 2022
Bradfords Awards for Excellence



Heavyside Supplier of the Year 2021
BMJ Industry Awards



Supplier of the Year 2022
Buildbase Awards



Civils & Groundworks Supplier of the Year 2022
Fortis Building & Timber Supplier Awards



Best Site Product 2022
Housebuilder Product Awards



Manufacturing Innovation 2022
Made in Northern Ireland Awards



Construction Product Innovation 2022
Irish Construction Excellence Awards