

Cautious Optimism

The media, which we have all criticised for talking us into a recession, have had a change of heart of late and could almost be accused of supporting the 'green shoots' philosophy!

It has picked up on various pieces of data that have been published recently, examples of which are:

The RICS UK housing market survey in May stated that:

- Further increase in both new buyer enquiries and sales, as well as a reduction in the level of stocks on surveyors' books has begun to provide some support for property prices.

The Halifax house price index reported recently that:

- House prices increased by 2.6% in May to £158,565. This increase followed three successive monthly declines of between 1.8% and 2.3%
- The house price to earnings ratio has declined from a peak of 5.84 in July 2007 to an estimated 4.36 in May 2009. The ratio is now at a level last seen in January 2003
- The proportion of disposable earnings devoted to mortgage payments has fallen significantly over the past 18 months. Nationally, typical mortgage payments for a new borrower have declined from a peak of 48% of average disposable earnings in 2007 Q3 to 31% in 2009 Q1.

The Nationwide house price index reported that:

- The average house price rose by 1.2% in May, from £151,861 in April to £154,016;
- The annual rate of decline improved sharply from -15.0% to -11.3%;
- The low supply levels may explain some of the improvement in price trends.

The affordability index calculated by the Housing Market Report publication shows that a household on single male average earnings would spend the same amount of their post tax earnings on a capital and interest mortgage to buy the average priced home in GB as they did in 1988, 2000 and 2003.



All of the economic commentators working for these companies have made it clear that it is too early to suggest a recovery is around the corner.

In addition to this there have been more positive reports from some of the major housebuilders via their interim reports:

- Barratts has sold 4,600 houses at acceptable prices since the New Year and are on track to produce their predicted volumes. They also intend to reduce the number of apartment blocks produced to below 30% of their total output
- Redrow is restarting construction on specific sites and are starting new sites from its existing landbank as a result of encouraging visitor and sales activity in recent months

All of these positive signs should be tempered with a degree of caution but we should take some comfort in the facts as presented and the small, but noticeable, increase in confidence that seems to be present now.

New service

Sales leads directly to our customers on a regular basis commencing in July. Recognising that the market has slowed it is important to treat every new lead as a potential opportunity. We will be supporting our customers over the coming months by providing them with new sales leads. For more information call Jason Ruddle or email us on gang-nail@eleco.com

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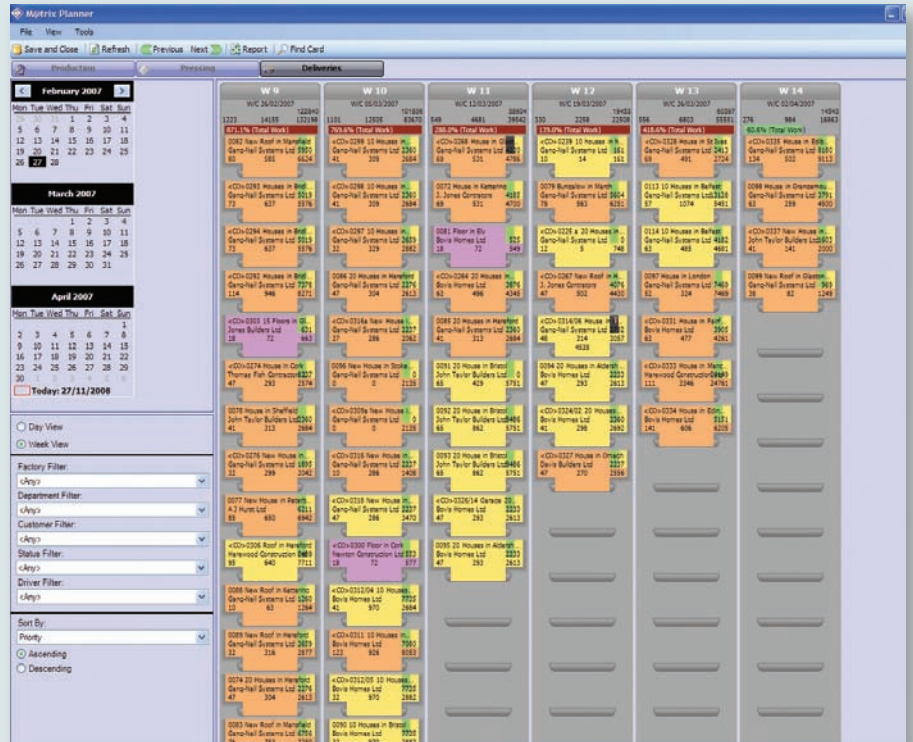
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Keeping up to date GN Matrix user group

Always seeking feedback and ways to improve, we recently invited a number of customers to the GN Matrix user group to present the new version and share thoughts and ideas on the best ways to update the package for future releases.

Nick Worboys from Pinewood Structures attended the meeting in Coventry. He found the experience a useful one: "As a new user, it was great to share ideas with Gang-Nail and other customers who are using the software. The addition of design planning is something we have been looking for, and thanks to the user group session, this will now be included on the updated version of GN Matrix."



Existing users also found the meeting valuable. Jack McMinn from Robinson Manufacturing said: "It is vital that our systems and process remain up to date so that we can service our customers efficiently and continue to meet their evolving expectations."

We regularly update software based on the feedback of customers. As such, we'd welcome any suggestions you may have to help us improve our service. To let us know your suggestions for future updates, please email gang-nail@eleco.com

Staying in touch with the market

As a leading provider of timber engineering technology, Gang-Nail recently exhibited at the TRADA In Touch with Timber conference, held at the QEII Conference Centre in Westminster.

Alongside a keynote presentation from one of the UK's leading architects, Alison Brookes, we presented our products to a variety of architects, engineers, contractors and surveyors integral to the industry.

The exhibition generated some genuine enquiries and positive feedback. As ever the aim with this type of event was to create sales leads for both ourselves and our customers, pushing housebuilder and developer enquiries back through our fabricator customer base.



Customers keep coming

We are still taking on new business with a number of customers across the UK, and have even branched further afield with the addition of Asmaz Timber Engineering, based in Turkey.

Amongst the new additions closer to home are Pinewood Structures, Midland Timber Engineering and Fencehouses Truss Company.

By incorporating either GN Roof & Truss software or investing in new saw and press equipment to extend their manufacturing capabilities, these four customers are now able to source their products, software and service from Gang-Nail to help streamline their manufacturing requirements for all of their timber engineering requirements.

Consultec StairCon is also attracting new customers in the shape of Just Stairs, Quayside Joinery and Baird's Windows. Eric Baird, Managing Director of Baird's Windows commented: "The incorporation of StairCon has made the design and manufacturing process far

quicker and easier, allowing us to increase our productivity."

Equally, SMS Timber Frame, Northshore Timber Frame Design and Paul Thomas Associates are now utilising our Framing software.

Paul Thomas, Managing Director of Paul Thomas Associates said: "The integration of the framing software into our daily manufacturing routine allows us to stay ahead of the competition in terms of providing quality designs that translate directly into expertly manufactured end products."



Seeing the positive curve

Innovations in curved truss manufacturing are enabling the realisation of more ambitious architectural designs, in sustainable timber.

Traditionally associated with pitched roofs, truss rafters are pushing into new areas and are increasingly being specified for architectural applications.

BSW Timber Systems recently completed its five month long timber engineering project for McCarthy & Stone's latest retirement development on the south coast in Worthing, West Sussex.

Consisting of three buildings, constructed in three phases, the architectural specification was for initial masonry construction topped by a timber frame.

"The effect is a series of three smooth curves rising one behind the other," explained Alan Beavis, Contracts Manager from BSW Timber Systems.

BSW Timber Systems' Ramsgate factory manufactured the curved trusses using Gang-Nail Systems Roof & Truss software.



Not such a long shot

It is not just architectural roof forms that are being created with timber trusses, the latest in timber engineering is also being used in solutions that would otherwise be constructed with steel.

In one of the first projects of its type in the UK, DWB Hull recently manufactured and delivered 38 no. long span trusses for the construction of the mono-pitched roof at a new Lidl store in Thirsk.

Already widely used across Germany in the retail and commercial sectors, long span trussed rafters are becoming more common in the UK.

Their increased use in retail and light industrial applications is being driven by environmental considerations, making timber components the obvious choice.

Transporting trusses on this scale was a challenge, as John Binns, Technical Director of DWB Hull, explains: "The trusses were so long and at their highest up to 3.8m, so transporting them fully constructed was not an option. Instead, we did as much as possible in the factory, to ease the time and effort required on site, manufacturing the components in two parts so that they could be transported efficiently and easily assembled onsite."

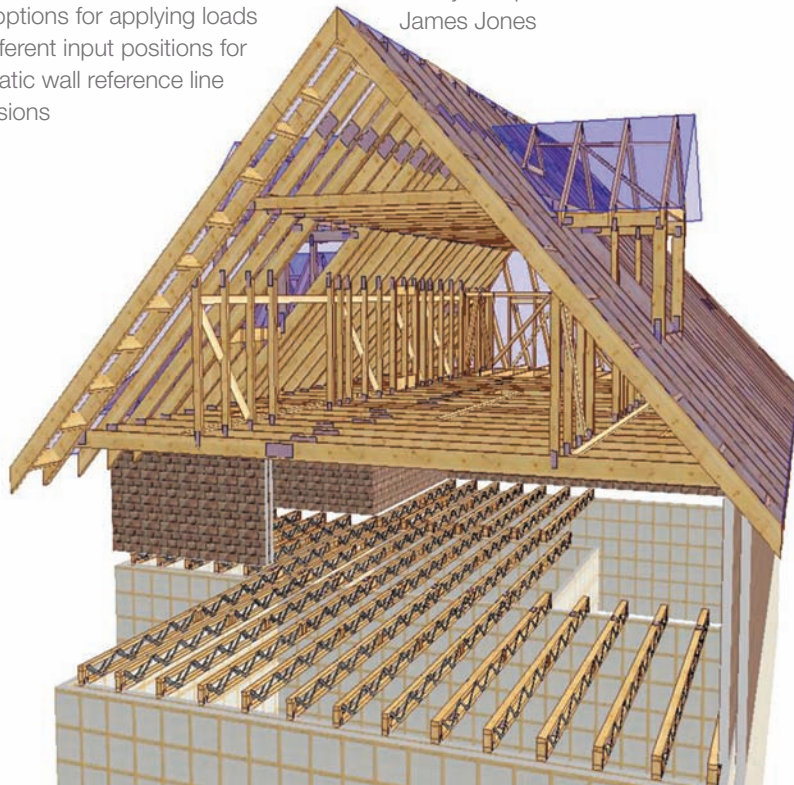
The two parts of the trusses were connected onsite using field splice plates. Particular attention had to be paid to the bracing of trussed rafters of this span and Gang-Nail's design team worked closely with Lidl's structural engineer in order to provide sufficient overall stability to the roof structure.

New software upgrades

Following our recent user group meetings we have listened to our customers' views and made significant upgrades to GN Roof & Truss, GN Ecojoist and GN Matrix. These are now available to you, keeping you as up to date as possible with the latest software available.

GN Roof & Truss:

- New drawing features: draw a truss or infill area for an irregular triangular or trapezoidal shape
- More options for applying loads
- Set different input positions for automatic wall reference line dimensions



GN Ecojoist:

- Upgraded automatic dimensioning on drawings and for cassette output to DXF
- New option to design deflection to EC5
- Better results on longer spans and multiple joists

GN Matrix:

- Production and delivery planning improvements
- Detailed graphs for volume of quotes/orders per customer
- New saw planner, stair pricing and improvements to the Framing software links
- Newly compatible with Steico and James Jones

Did you know?

The latest proposed revisions to Part L state that carbon emissions for new buildings will be cut by an aggregated 25% next year, with a further reduction in 2013.

Give us your feedback

Customers old and new can give us their feedback on any of these stories. Simply log on to our freshly updated website at www.gangnail.co.uk and visit the interactive forum section.

Elsewhere on the site you'll find news on our products and services with detailed software guides covering Consultec StairCon, Consultec Framing, GN Ecojoist, GN Roof & Truss and GN Matrix, in addition to continually updated news items relevant to the timber engineering industry.

New Distribution Depot opens in Ireland

"Gang-Nail continues to provide added value and service when the market most needs it; an excellent decision; the right move at the right time."

To provide our customers in Ireland and Northern Ireland a delivery service of 1-2 days or in some cases

next day, Gang-Nail successfully opened a distribution depot in March this year for connector plates and metal webs. With dramatic changes in the market place in recent years, we felt it was still the right time to invest in this new venture to help reduce stock level requirements within the client base.

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