

ANNUAL REVIEW

2017 - 2018



Furniture Industry Research Association



Knowledge
Information
Research
Influence



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Welcome to the second annual review during my tenure as Chairman of the Furniture Industry Research Association.

12 months ago in the 2016/2017 review I introduced our four pillars (knowledge, research, information, influence) which underpin the work of the Research Association. Much work has taken place throughout 2017 guided by these pillars, and to reflect this the Annual Review is all centered on this work.

Under 'knowledge' read about the paper authored by Phil Reynolds, General Manager of the Association's service supplier, FIRA International, on fire regulations. Working with the British Furniture Confederation, the paper aims to inform the industry on proposed changes to the fire regulations, and intends to kick-start government discussion on this emotive topic.

Under 'research' you can learn more about the work behind the new bariatric seating standard, FS 058: 2017 Seating - Performance and dimensional requirement for bariatric seating. We also give updates on our important circular economy work, giving you updates on projects underway during our last annual review. You can also go to www.fira.co.uk/research to see the most current published research.

Moving to 'information' we have an extract from our annual Statistics Digest, giving you the view of the latest facts and figures on furniture manufacturing and trade. Use this as a barometer of the overall industry. We also have three pages dedicated to the latest standards updates. Members regularly tell us

how key this knowledge is to them, so we've listened and allocate 15% of the Research Association's budget to supporting standards development, ensuring there is representation from the Research Association on British, European and International committees. Alongside this update Research Association members are advised to check the latest status of standards via www.fira.co.uk/standardsplus/browse - a fully searchable database which is regularly updated.

Read about 'influence' through our important work with the British Furniture Confederation (BFC), including work with the All Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group (APPPFIG), their manifesto, work around education and funding, supporting exporting and their focus on sustainability. See the latest news and projects from the BFC at www.britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk.

Hopefully this gives you a taste of the broad range of work the Research Association has embarked on throughout 2017. And in this review for the first time we've included a new outlook section, so you can get an insight as to work which will be undertaken during 2018. For members we also cover off important pointers to ensure you're all making the most of your membership

As always I would love to hear your views on the work of the Research Association, please send your feedback, comments or ideas to membership@fira.co.uk.



Finally, in closing, I would like to thank everyone who assisted the Research Association in 2017. Whether you're a member, attended one of our events, aided the council or played your part in shaping our knowledge, research, information or influence, your support is invaluable in helping us achieve all that we did in 2017.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Vernon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Charles Vernon
Chairman, Furniture Industry
Research Association

The FIRA Council

As of January 2018, the Furniture Industry Research Association Council comprised:

Chairman, Charles Vernon	
Vice Chairman, Mark Richardson	Blum UK Ltd
Jessica Alexander	National Bed Federation Ltd
Anne Barber	In Heaven at Home
Steve Barton	LifeArt Ltd (co-opted)
Pete Beele	FIRA International Ltd
Alan Bennett	Stuart Jones Ltd
Eric Catton	Catton Associates (co-opted)
Paul Critchley	Home Retail Group Plc
Andy Green	Ministry of Furniture
Jonathan Hindle	KI Group
Rob Jones	ScS
Rodney McMahan	Morgan Contract Furniture Ltd
Nigel Punshon	Hille Educational Products
Richard Ranklin	Association of Master Upholsterers & Soft Furnishers
Phil Reynolds	FIRA International Ltd
John Stevenson	Exova Group

The Research Association would like to thank the following Council members who stood down from the Council in 2017, for their hard work and support of the Research Association:

- **Andy Corbett** – Vita Cellular Foams UK Ltd
- **David Huss** – European Furniture Group Ltd
- **Margaret Miller** – Knightsbridge Furniture Productions Ltd
- **Jeremy Stein** – British Contract Furnishing Association
- **Richard Stevenson** – Wellman International Ltd
- **Rob Veitch** – Exova Group

In 2017 the Furniture Industry Research Association welcomed 36 new members:

- **ACCO Brands**
- **Akzo Nobel Industrial Coatings Ltd**
- **Alfred Franks & Bartlett**
- **Atlas Furniture Asia**
- **BDP Imports (Bramblecrest)**
- **BFM Ltd**
- **CDS Superstores t/a The Range Home, Leisure & Garden**
- **Chris Garrod Global**
- **Coach House**
- **Dalen Ltd**
- **Dilwyn Lear Ltd**
- **Dorel Home Furnishings Ltd**
- **Fox Linton Ltd**
- **Global Upholstery Solutions Ltd**
- **Globe Online (Worldstores)**
- **Halls Furnishings Ltd t/a LOFT Interiors**
- **Hill Upholstery & Design**
- **Houzz Shop LLC**
- **Insignia Manufacturing Ltd**
- **Kettler GB Ltd**
- **Kids Funtime Beds Ltd**
- **L Jones Chairframes Ltd**
- **Matalan Retail Ltd**
- **Palliser Furniture Upholstery Ltd**
- **Parlour Farm Kitchens**
- **PJTC**
- **S. A. Wood Chemicals Sdn Bhd**
- **Sainsbury's Argos**
- **SGS-CSTC Standards Tech Services Co. Ltd**
- **Shanghai Meaton Trade Co. Ltd**
- **Siddall & Hilton Products Ltd**
- **Steeple Associates Ltd t/a Peter Cook International**
- **Stuart Jones Ltd**
- **Stuart Scott Associates Ltd**
- **The Contract Chair Company**
- **TK Components**



The 'four pillars' – Knowledge, research, information, influence

Established in 1949, the Furniture Industry Research Association is the UK's largest furniture research association and the only organisation that provides support to the whole furniture supply chain, across all sectors. The Research Association is a unique not-for-profit membership-based organisation run by the furniture industry, for the furniture industry. Membership is based on four pillars; knowledge, research, information and influence.

Knowledge

As the Research Association for the furniture industry, FIRA is at the centre of technical knowledge. Members are kept up-to-date with changes to standards and regulations. Updates from standards committee meetings are shared to enable members to follow key decisions and objections affecting their sector. Latest regulation changes and news on compliance affecting everything from timber to chemicals, from flammability to safety is also made available to members.

There's also a wealth of knowledge contained within the Standards Database on fira.co.uk which is exclusive to members. This contains a description of each standard, status, year, standard type and much more.

Research

From an annual Statistics Digest to Quarterly Standards Updates, to research on the hot topics which affect the industry, the Research Association funds and undertakes key research to help members understand trends, market conditions and regulations.

Information

The members-only section of fira.co.uk hosts all of FIRA's knowledge and research. As part of membership, your employees receive a login so they can search and access what they need, when they need it.

Influence

The Research Association works with the British Furniture Confederation (BFC) to ensure the industry's views are taken into account within government. Members can feedback through consultations to share their views with government, standards committees and other bodies which affect the industry.

The Furniture Industry Research Association and FIRA International

FIRA International is the exclusive service provider to the Furniture Industry Research Association. FIRA International offers solutions across the global furniture supply chain including testing, consultancy, training and furniture aftercare. Due to the close relationship between the Research Association and FIRA International, full association members receive 'voucher credits' which can be redeemed against the cost of FIRA International commercial services. Members also receive preferential rates on FIRA International testing and training services.

Not a member?

Membership of the Research Association is open to all across the furniture supply chain, and we have tailored membership types to suit different organisations. By joining you will be supporting the Association in furthering research and knowledge to the wider benefit of the industry. Membership runs for 12 months and you can join at any time.

If you are interested in joining email membership@fira.co.uk or call +44 (0)1438 777 700. As soon as your membership is confirmed you will have access to all member benefits.



Facts and Figures

Furniture Recovery Continues

The Research Association's annual 'Statistics Digest' shows that consumer demand for furniture and furnishings continues to grow. Whilst some of this growth has been fed by rising imports, UK manufacturers have also benefited, with 2016 being the latest in five successive years of incremental growth.

Consumer expenditure

Consumer expenditure on furniture and furnishings was almost £16.7 billion in 2016. This represented a 24% increase from 2013. Year-on-year growth from 2013 to 2015 was between 8-9%. However, growth from 2015 to 2016 was somewhat less, at 6%.

The full retail picture for 2017 has yet to emerge, but preliminary signs are good, despite press speculation to the contrary. Sales continued to rise into 2017 with first and second quarter consumer expenditures being between 5-6% higher than for the equivalent periods in 2016.

Furniture manufacturing

UK furniture manufacturers have continued to perform well over recent years with 2016 sales reaching £8.4 billion; 4.5% higher than the previous year. Provisional data for the first three quarters of 2017 suggest another year of growth, although anecdotal evidence for the last quarter has been somewhat circumspect.

Furniture manufacturing in 2013 equated to 1.35% of the UK's total manufacturing turnover, whereas in 2016 this increased to 1.60%, a sign that the sector is performing better than some of its counterparts.

It is difficult to draw employment comparisons over time due to the nature of the source data. However, UK furniture manufacturers employed an average of 88,000 individuals in 2016 and, despite their turnover being 1.60% of the total for UK manufacturing, the sector accounted for 3.47% of all manufacturing personnel.

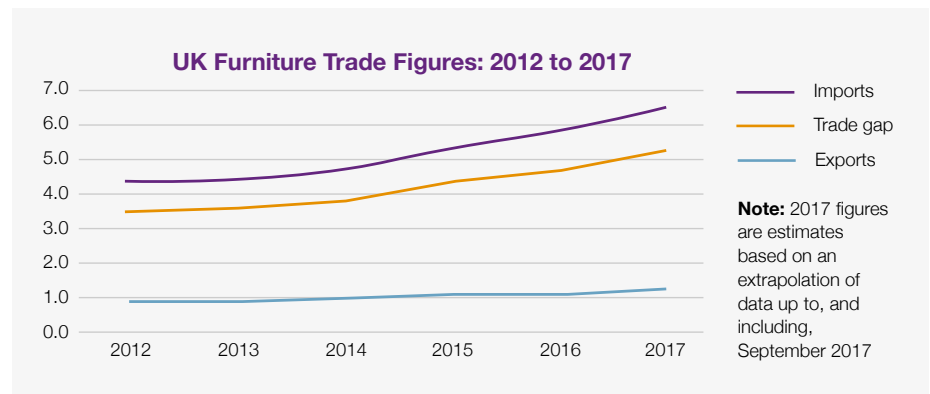
International trade

Total furniture imports into the UK are on the rise, with the provisional figure for 2016 being £5.8 billion. Extrapolations based on import data published up to September suggest that the total for 2017 could increase to about £6.5 billion once the full year's figures are confirmed.

Estimates for 2017, based on extrapolations from September data, are that this figure will exceed £1.23 billion, which will equate to another year-on-year rise, this time of 9%.

Despite the UK's strengthening export performance, the 2016 negative trade gap with China (the largest for the sector) increased to £1.86 billion (from £1.75 billion in 2015). Next on the list were the negative trade gaps with Poland, Italy and Germany, which equated to £0.58 billion, £0.56 billion and £0.50 billion respectively.

It is interesting to note that 22% of exports were to the Republic of Ireland



The UK furniture sector's export performance always appears relatively static, especially when compared with the much larger values attributable to imports. However, exports have gradually increased since 2012, reaching £1.13 billion in 2016, which represented a 13% increase on the previous year.

and 63% to the European Community as a whole. With Brexit looming it is clear that the EU represents an important market for UK furniture manufacturers. However, many of these countries continued to export more to the UK than vice versa resulting in a 2016 negative EU trade gap of £2.20 billion.

Visit www.fira.co.uk/publications to download your copy of the 'Statistics Digest', available free of charge to members or for £2,000 +VAT for non-members.

Standards Update

Fifteen percent of the Research Association's budget is allocated to standards making, ensuring the UK is represented by the Research Association experts on British, European and International committees.

This investment not only reflects the resource required to influence, negotiate and deliver a suite of robust and practical standards, but is also a measure of the importance that members place on knowing how these standards will impact on their products; in most cases before final documentation is ever published. With Brexit fast approaching it can only be expected that standards expertise and knowledge will be increasingly important factors in future business considerations.

Standards information is regularly collated by the Research Association's representatives and communicated as member-only benefits in the form of:

- A quarterly update on the latest status of furniture standards under development.
- A fully searchable database of current and recently withdrawn standards.

Within the Research Association's field of representation, 2017 saw the publication of 16 new or amended standards, with a further 27 (not listed in the 2016-2017 Annual Review) released in 2016. Six of these have been devised by the Research Association to plug technical gaps and / or to clarify interpretation of other standards.

Key Information and Updates

New standards released in 2017

ANSI/BIFMA X5.1:2017. Office Chairs

FIRA / FRQG G0001:2017. Glass in furniture. Requirements

FS 058:2017. Seating. Performance and dimensional requirements for bariatric seating

BS 6222-2:2009+A1:2017. Domestic kitchen equipment. Fitted kitchen units, peninsular units, island units and breakfast bars. Performance requirements and test methods

BS 6222-3:2017. Domestic kitchen equipment. Part 3: Performance requirements for durability of surface finish and adhesion of surfacing and edging materials. Specification

BS EN 581-1:2017. Outdoor furniture. Seating and tables for camping, domestic and contract use. General safety requirements

BS EN 581-3:2017. Outdoor furniture. Seating and tables for camping, domestic and contract use. Mechanical safety requirements for tables

BS EN 716-1:2017. Furniture. Children's cots and folding cots for domestic use. Safety requirements

BS EN 716-2: 2017. Furniture. Children's cots and folding cots for domestic use. Test methods

BS EN 1272:2017. Child care articles. Table mounted chairs. Safety requirements and test methods

BS EN 14988:2017. Children's high chairs. Requirements and test methods

BS EN 16890:2017. Children's furniture. Mattresses for cots and cribs. Safety requirements and test methods

BS EN 16955:2017. Hardware for furniture. Tapered pressure tubes for self-supporting gas springs for the height adjustment of seating. Test methods and requirements for strength and durability

BS EN ISO 5402-1:2017. Leather. Determination of flex resistance. Flexometer method

BS EN ISO 9227:2017. Corrosion tests in artificial atmospheres. Salt spray tests

New standards released in 2016

FIRA/FRQG C001: 2016 - Furniture
- Children's Domestic Furniture -
General safety requirements

FIRA/FRQG C002: 2016 - Furniture
- Children's domestic furniture
- Seating - Requirements for
strength, stability and durability

FIRA/FRQG C003: 2016 - Furniture
- Children's domestic furniture -
Tables & desks – Requirements for
strength, stability and durability

FIRA/FRQG C004: 2016 - Furniture
- Children's domestic furniture -
Storage furniture - Requirements for
strength, stability and durability

BS 8423:2010+A1:2016. Fireguards
for fires and heating appliances
for domestic use. Specification

BS EN 204:2016. Classification
of thermoplastic wood adhesives
for non-structural applications

BS EN 205:2016. Adhesives.
Wood adhesives for non-structural
applications. Determination of tensile
shear strength of lap joints

BS EN 438-1:2016. High-pressure
decorative laminates (HPL). Sheets
based on thermosetting resins
(usually called laminates). Introduction
and general information

BS EN 438-2:2016. High-pressure
decorative laminates (HPL). Sheets based
on thermosetting resins (usually called
laminates). Determination of properties

BS EN 438-3:2016. High-pressure
decorative laminates (HPL). Sheets
based on thermosetting resins (usually
called laminates). Classification
and specifications for laminates
less than 2 mm thick intended for
bonding to supporting substrates

BS EN 438-4:2016. High-pressure
decorative laminates (HPL). Sheets
based on thermosetting resins (usually
called laminates). Classification and
specifications for compact laminates
of thickness 2 mm and greater

BS EN 438-5:2016. High-pressure
decorative laminates (HPL). Sheets
based on thermosetting resins (usually
called laminates). Classification and
specifications for flooring grade laminates
less than 2 mm thick intended for
bonding to supporting substrates

BS EN 438-6:2016. High-pressure
decorative laminates (HPL). Sheets
based on thermosetting resins (usually
called laminates). Classification and
specifications for Exterior-grade compact
laminates of thickness 2 mm and greater

BS EN 527-2:2016. Office furniture.
Work tables. Safety, strength
and durability requirements

BS EN 12727:2016. Furniture.
Ranked seating. Requirements for
safety, strength and durability

BS EN 15372:2016. Furniture.
Strength, durability and safety.
Requirements for non-domestic tables

BS EN 16120:2012+A2:2016. Child use
and care articles. Chair mounted seat

BS EN ISO 105-D02:2016. Textiles.
Tests for colour fastness. Colour
fastness to rubbing: Organic solvents

BS EN ISO 105-X12:2016.
Textiles. Tests for colour fastness.
Colour fastness to rubbing

BS EN ISO 105-X16:2016. Textiles.
Tests for colour fastness. Colour
fastness to rubbing. Small areas

BS EN ISO 2589:2016. Leather.
Physical and mechanical tests.
Determination of thickness

BS EN ISO 3377-2:2016.
Leather. Physical and mechanical
tests. Determination of tear
load. Double edge tear

BS EN ISO 12947-2:2016. Textiles.
Determination of the abrasion resistance
of fabrics by the Martindale method.
Determination of specimen breakdown

BS ISO 22879:2016. Castors
and wheels. Requirements
for castors for furniture

BS ISO 22880:2016. Castors
and wheels. Requirements for
castors for swivel chairs
ISO 16893:2016. Wood-based
panels. Particleboard

Standards in development

With 43 standards published in less than 2 years there hardly seems time to consider the review of other documentation. However, at the time of writing (November 2017) Research Association experts are actively reviewing and developing approximately 50 additional British, European and International standards.

One of the Research Association's main initiatives in 2017 has been to develop a mutually recognisable Technical Report covering the entrapment of fingers. This was prompted by the fact that entrapment is a key safety element of many standards yet there is an inconsistency of approach and requirements leading to potential confusion amongst designers, manufacturers and standards developers. This will not only streamline the development of new standards, but will also introduce consistency as and when existing versions are reviewed, revised and re-published.

The draft Technical Report is entitled 'FprCEN/TR 17202. September

2017. General safety guidelines. Entrapment of fingers', and the final draft was circulated for approval to publish, with a voting deadline of 21 November 2017. It comprises:

- A general safety philosophy.
- A guideline on the safety assessment that experts are recommended to use when drafting standards.
- Guidance on specific general safety recommendations.
- Test methods relating to hazards caused by holes and openings that are common to all types of furniture.

The Technical Report addresses common risks posed by items of furniture to adults and children over 36 months old. For children under 36 month's reference needs to be made to the 'CEN/TR 13387-5:2015. Child use and care articles. General safety guidelines. Product information' suite of documents.

The safety risks addressed are hazards caused by holes and openings and specifically:

- Entrapment of fingers.
- Shearing or compression/ crushing of fingers.
- Sharp edges.
- Safety risks outside of the scope of the document, but still potentially caused by holes and openings, include:
 - Entrapment of head and neck.
 - Entrapment of limbs.

These guidelines do not cover all types of hazards and risks, such as inappropriate use of products, or inadequate supervision of children.

Standards updates are regularly communicated to members of the Research Association and the searchable standards database is updated as and when standards are published, amended or withdrawn.

www.fira.co.uk/standards-plus/browse

FIRA Standards Database

The screenshot shows the FIRA Standards Database website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Search, About Us, Contact, and Logout. Below this is the FIRA logo and the text 'The UK's Largest Furniture Association' with a phone number. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: Membership > Standards & Technical Information > Members Directory > Commercial Services > Buying Guides > News > Training & Events. The current page is titled 'Standards Plus' and displays the standard 'BS EN 15372:2016'. A 'Standard Description' section explains that this European Standard specifies requirements for the safety, strength, and durability of all types of non-domestic tables, including those with glass. It notes that the standard does not apply to office work tables or desks, tables for educational institutions, or outdoor tables. A table at the bottom shows the 'Standard Status' as 'Current'. On the right side, there is a 'Navigate Standards' section with filters for Year (2016), Product (Tables), Sector (N/A), and Type (Harmonised European Standard). Below this is a 'Standards Search' box and a 'Browse all Standards' link.

British Furniture Confederation

The Single Voice of the Furniture Industry

The Research Association's ability to influence key decision makers in Westminster, Whitehall and Brussels is one of the core benefits of membership. The Furniture Industry Research Association combines forces with other trade bodies in the guise of the British Furniture Confederation (BFC), which acts as industry's single voice for dialogue with government. As Research Association Directors, FIRA International's Phil Reynolds and Peter Beele both retain positions on the BFC's Executive Board.

All Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group

Communication with politicians and civil servants is often facilitated as a result of the existence of the All Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group (APPPFIG), chaired by Stephen McPartland MP (Stevenage). Subsequent to a General Election every 'All Party Group' is required to disband and reform within a stipulated time scale. Given the importance of the group to industry, its reformation was key and this was formalised at a meeting in Westminster in September 2017.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for industry leaders from 30 companies to better understand the new role that Trading Standards will play in the enforcement of regulations that impact on the furniture sector. Speakers at the event included Stephen McPartland MP; Lord Toby Harris, Chairman of the National Trading Standards Board and Erica Sherward from the Regulatory Delivery team at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which oversees Primary Authority Partnerships with regional Trading Standards authorities. They addressed some of the issues facing both industry, and enforcers, in fighting a rising tide of rogue traders, particularly the new challenges presented by e-commerce.

General Election, Brexit and manifesto

The 2017 General Election and earlier Brexit vote have significantly altered the political landscape. Whilst the BFC's messages have always been clear, it became apparent that the phrasing of its objectives needed to be aligned with government thinking and reflect questions being raised in a series of

consultations which required BFC input. These consultations included:

- Potential impacts of Brexit on industry and meetings with BEIS
- Green Paper on 'Building our Industrial Strategy'
- Migration Advisory Consultation

To this effect the furniture industry was asked to respond to a series of questions and the BFC published a manifesto setting out calls for action covering issues such as:

- Skills and apprenticeships
- Trade and exports
- Fire resistance regulations
- Circular economy

The plan is to review and amend this manifesto in 2018 so it continues to echo industry's needs and engage with current political thinking.

Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations

Considerable technical and political effort was invested in the progression of the re-write of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations (FFFSR). The long-standing expertise of FIRA International's Phil Reynolds has been critical to this campaign. Revision of the Regulations has been on the industry's agenda for many (over seven) years, but, despite it having initiated a series of consultations, progress within BEIS has been slow, partly influenced by the differing opinions of a wide range of stakeholders.

In the summer of 2017, fuelled by continued procrastination on behalf of



government, the BFC consulted a wide range of industry organisations and put forward a workable, mutually acceptable solution in an attempt to progress the revision and remove the current state of limbo which is proving disconcerting to manufacturers, retailers and importers alike. A response had still not been received in November 2017 and the BFC continues to explore all avenues to expedite a conclusion to this issue.

Education and funding

Representations to government were made due to industry concerns about the impacts that latest education policies would have on the availability of design and technology qualifications in schools, which are the cornerstones for many who would wish to progress a career in furniture manufacturing.

In addition, inequitable funding for the adult education budget, and the importance of furniture industry specific apprenticeships, both at level 2 and level 3, have all been on the BFC's campaign agenda. Future funding is particularly critical to apprenticeships and education and a pre-budget letter, sent to Chancellor Philip Hammond MP, pointed out that:

- The sector's year on year growth relies on the ability to access specialised training across the country.
- When the UK leaves the European Union, it is assumed that industry will not have the same access to the European employment pool as it currently does. Consequently investment in training is imperative if industry is to replace the current skilled workers sourced from within

the European employment market.

- Some companies are seeing the apprenticeship levy as another 'tax', and not as a fund to assist furniture companies to employ apprentices. Government needs to ensure levied money is fully spent on apprenticeships. Any unspent money within the sector must be reinvested in the training and education of the furniture industry and not diverted to other unknown budgets.
- There must be an adequate and fair distribution of the adult education budget (AEB). Many of these providers within the furniture sector rely on the provision of training to both adults and young people for their organisations to remain viable. Removal of support for adult education will, therefore, impact on their ability to support government's '3 million apprenticeships' goal.

Exporting

There was a continued push for greater clarity of export support and Trade Show Access (TAP) funding through meetings and representations with UKTI and the Trade Alliance. This subject formed the basis of a meeting in Westminster in late 2016 and greater clarity on government's long term strategic intentions in this area continues to be sought. Engagement within this area has been particularly frustrating due to regular changes in ministerial responsibilities.

Sustainability

A watching brief has been maintained on sustainability, end of life and the circular economy, and there has been greater involvement in applicable

consultations and standards associated with these important business functions. In particular, the BFC has kept itself informed on European lobbying for the removal of flame retardants from furniture and on potential extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes for mattresses and furniture.

This is just a snapshot of the work carried out by the Research Association on behalf of, and in collaboration with, the British Furniture Confederation. Details of latest campaigns and events, plus the full content of the BFC manifesto and its response to the green paper consultation on building an industrial strategy can be found on the BFC website.

www.britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk



Bfc

THE BRITISH FURNITURE CONFEDERATION

The single voice of the furniture & bed industry

Flammability Regulations

The BFC's perspective on the proposed changes

The Furniture Industry Research Association's Director, Phil Reynolds, played a key role in the British Furniture Confederation's (BFC) campaign to revise the Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended) (FFFSRs) through drafting a consultation paper which was published in July 2017. The full paper and proposals are available on the BFC website (www.britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk), but in essence:

Since its inception the BFC has supported the FFFSR and has campaigned to have the regulations revised and improved to remove areas of uncertainty, and to reflect developments in materials and manufacturing techniques.

In the absence of a revision, two fire safety guides were commissioned for both the domestic and contract market sectors, explaining the obligations of importers, manufacturers and retailers, as well as offering advice on areas of uncertainty that still remain enshrined within the current regulations.

The FFFSRs, combined with the increase in the use of smoke alarms and reduction in smoking in the home, have been instrumental in driving down the number of deaths in house fires by slowing down the rate of escalation of fires and increasing the time home dwellers have to exit a building. This view is supported by two Government reports and a recent report by the Federation of the European Union Fire Officers Associations.

The BFC has been actively involved in the various initiatives undertaken by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and its predecessors, to revise the FFFSR, contributing to all consultations, pre-consultation meetings and technical meetings, as it is committed to ensuring the UK has the best fire safety legislation in the world.

Initiatives to raise fire safety standards across Europe to a level equivalent to the UK are supported, such as those proposed by the Federation of the European Union Fire Officers Associations.

Successful implementation of the FFFSRs is dependent on enforcement. BEIS is urged to adequately fund Trading Standards to ensure this takes place. Recent targeted investigations by BEIS/ Trading Standards have identified significant levels of non-compliance which reinforces the need both for applicable regulations and for an adequately resourced enforcement agency.

The National Bed Federation, the Leisure and Outdoor Furniture Association and the Furniture Industry Research Association sit on the BFC Executive and have introduced, or are introducing, audited code of conduct schemes requiring that the furniture industry has systems in place to demonstrate compliance with the FFFSRs. These involve collaboration with Trading Standards but will significantly reduce their burden of enforcement.

The BEIS initiative to fully revise the FFFSRs was fully welcomed. However, research by Executive member Associations indicated that proposed changes would not have the desired effect of reducing the amount of fire retardant chemicals being used and would result in more variability in test results, which would be detrimental both in terms of manufacture and enforcement.

An alternative, interim solution to amend the regulations, has been proposed and circulated to key stakeholders. This has the full support of the BFC's member associations and the British Retail Consortium. This proposal would allow for a reduction in levels of fire retardants in some fabrics without affecting fire safety. It would result in immediate meaningful, enforceable regulation, enabling industry to focus on the development of solutions that maintain fire safety yet reduce the need for potentially hazardous chemical treatments.

Phil Reynolds said 'The furniture industry has been criticised by some for opposing changes to the UK's fire safety legislation for furniture. This couldn't be further from the truth as the BFC has long petitioned for changes to the regulations which are now 30 years old. What the industry needs is certainty – both in terms of what changes are going to happen and when, and that any changes produce consistent results, whilst maintaining the current level of fire safety in the home.'

www.britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk

Bariatric Seating

Setting the Standards

September 2017 saw the publication of our new standard for bariatric seating; FS 058: 2017 Seating - Performance and dimensional requirement for bariatric seating.

The development of the standard took a number of years and involved engagement with a number of stakeholders including the health service, patients, retailers, manufacturers and suppliers to the healthcare market.

The standard was created in response to the growing number of people in Western Europe becoming overweight, seeing obesity becoming a major challenge. Obesity raises the risk of heart disease, cancer and diabetes, and some studies estimate that nearly 10% of medical spending can be attributed to bariatric patients. The demand for products for bariatric users (those who weigh in excess of 20 stone) is increasing, however there is a lack of information for manufacturers developing bariatric products to help them meet this challenge.

With this in mind, the Research Association experts undertook interviews and fact-finding discussions with all stakeholders and worked with bariatric models, using pressure mapping, to assess load distribution of bariatric users as they sit down, relax and then get out of seating. This research, combined with the Research Association's intimate knowledge of furniture standards and testing, has resulted in the UK's first bariatric furniture standard.

Sections of the standard include:

- Test equipment and test conditions
- Tolerances
- General safety requirements, including squeeze and shear points
- Stability of seating and also swivel seats
- Strength and durability requirements, including seat and back loading points
- Dimensional requirements, including filling materials, seat support, back supports, arm support and general considerations

The standard does not contain requirements for more specialist seating such as riser-recliner seating, ranked seating, seating for educational institutions and work chairs for industrial use. Whilst these uses are excluded from the scope of this document, the requirements contained within the standard may be used as a guide in developing performance and dimensional requirements for such uses.

Chief Ergonomist at FIRA International, Levent Çaglar, who led the research said:

“We were really pleased to announce the publication of this standard. It presented a unique challenge, as no two bariatric patients are the same in size, shape, weight and ability. This means just making a larger version of existing designs is not realistic, you have to consider size and shape, the type of fillings needed to give adequate support to a bariatric user. In addition the mobility of patients can be a significant factor, larger patients tend to be less mobile

and this poses additional safety risks, both from excessive periods of inactivity and then the risk to the user and carers when exiting the chair. We believe this standard offers excellent advice to designers and manufacturers of bariatric products, and also those specifying products for bariatric users.”

The Research Association would like to thank all the stakeholders who contributed to the development of this standard and in particular Association members Knightsbridge Furniture, who supplied seating samples for assessment, and Vitafoam who shared their experiences in supplying foams and fillings for bariatric seating.

www.fira.co.uk/ergonomics



Sustainability

Sustainability across the furniture supply chain

The Research Association has a keen interest in sustainability, recognising the role the furniture industry can play in promoting and practicing a circular economy (whereby products and materials are kept in circulation for as long as possible through reuse or recycling).

Sustainable Hotspot Analysis Report

Highlighted in our last review, this project was delivered in 2017 and provided a wide ranging resource hotspot analysis, with an emphasis on furniture products.

The full report was made available to members in May 2017. The report presented the wide ranging aspects of a sustainability hotspot analysis by researching and contextualising the commercial, reputational and material source risks that exist within supply chains. It aimed to inform business leaders of practical methodologies that will mitigate these risks, which in turn enables data driven, sustainability decision making within organisations.

The report showed that across the furniture industry much wider considerations are needed than just carbon foot printing, and this should align with a risk based approach. This is important and should be familiar ground for those who have transitioned or are in the process of transitioning to the latest ISO9001 / 14001 standards and for those organisations that are requesting or experiencing requests for more information from their customers as part of retailer or customer due diligence.

Furniture Industry Research Association members can read the full report at www.fira.co.uk/publications

Remanufacturing Product Standard

Another project which made good progress in was the 'Remanufacturing Product Standard'

The first technical committee for the standard met in 2017. It is planned that the first draft standard will incorporate considerations for:

- A single product standard to deal with refurbishment and remanufacturing
- Good as new products
- Minimum warranty equivalent to that of new products
- Defined product core
- There will be a limited initial scope of chairs and desks (i.e. high value items where there is an existing supply chain and market)
- Required documentation
- Traceability to product specifications / testing conducted

The remanufactured products will need to demonstrate:

- They are safe
- Fit for purpose
- Meet ergonomic requirements
- Meet relevant legislation, e.g. for display screen equipment etc.

Further updates on the standard are planned for 2018.

Circular Economy Task Force for the industry

The task force has been set up, and they have consulted on the remanufacturing standard. The small technical committee has representatives from across the furniture chain, giving a balanced view of what the standard needs to achieve in order to meet the needs of both the environment and the furniture industry.

Establishing a product stewardship framework and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Scheme

As the initial project scope for an EPR was undertaken, signs from the furniture industry was that there was no tangible demand for an EPR, nor is there the likelihood of a UK Government push for further EPRs. The devolved administrations are more interested in EPR schemes, however they are not currently looking at furniture specific schemes as there is a stronger focus on generic bulky waste schemes, but with concerns rising about the environmental and financial impact of fly tipping this may change. The initial research did highlight good work through current French EPR schemes, so should this project continue their model would most likely be the basis.

Any members interested in an EPR scheme should email info@fira.co.uk.

More Membership Projects

Supporting the Furniture Industry

A number of smaller, but still important research projects were carried out throughout 2017 on a range of topics to educate and advise members.

REACH

The Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) Regulations continue to be of importance to many members, and much work was communicated to members on this topic throughout 2017.

In July a new substance was added to the Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC) Candidate List under the REACH Regulations, alongside updates to five chemicals. As such the Research Association published a guide to support members. This was alongside additional reports published in February and June to further support members in understanding more about REACH obligations.

CE Marking for Electrically Actuated Furniture

October saw a new 42 page guide for Research Association members published: 'Electrically actuated furniture for the domestic market - a guide to the UK Regulations'. The guide served to help those from across the furniture supply chain to understand how the European Machinery Directive 2006/42/EC 2006/42/EC impacts domestic furniture, especially after updates to the directive which came into effect in July 2017.

European Timber Regulations

Much work took place around educating members on the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) – which came into force in March 2013, with the aim of preventing illegally harvested wood from being placed onto

the market within the European Union. A new guide was published to help members understand more about the EUTR, and how to remain compliant.



EU Green Public Procurement (GPP) guidelines for textiles

In June, advice was issued to members on how to be compliant with the new EU Green Public Procurement (GPP) guidelines for textiles, which were launched earlier that month. The EU GPP criteria exist to facilitate the inclusion of green requirements in public tender documents. The criteria aims to reach a balance between environmental performance, cost considerations, market availability and ease of verification. Tender documents may include all or some of the GPP

guidelines, depending on the specific requirements of the tender, and this guide aimed to support members to learn more about how to meet the guidelines.

Environmental Legislation for Weeds and Non Native Species

Another guide exclusively for members was 'Environmental Legislation for Weeds and Non Native Species', which simplified the Regulations that govern the identification and management of weeds and non-native flora species by occupiers and landowners. The guide was produced following feedback from some members that the management of weeds and the presence of non-native species was of increasing concern.



www.fira.co.uk/publications

The Gold Standard



FIRA Gold Certification

Research Association members are eligible to apply for FIRA Gold certification, which is the recognised quality mark for furniture products or installation services. FIRA Gold certification applies to installation or products across the supply chain, including the domestic and non-domestic sectors, and is applicable for entire final products, or components.

To be certified FIRA Gold, the product or installation service is assessed against specific performance levels through vigorous tests conducted by FIRA International. The FIRA Gold Certification holder is then re-assessed via future audit testing and inspections to ensure standards remain high.

In 2017 we recognised the following Research Association members with FIRA Gold certification:

TK Components

In February, a range of kitchen doors and panels from TK Components (TKC) achieved FIRA Gold Product certification. In addition to the product testing, the certification assessment included a warehouse inspection, during which the assessor noted he was very impressed with quality control practices in place.



Howdens Joinery Co.

Howdens Joinery Co.

In April, Howdens Joinery Co received FIRA Gold Product certification for a range of their kitchen doors and panels. A number of the Howdens Joinery Co team attended the Furniture Industry Research Association annual reception at the House of Lords where they were presented with their certification.

Wade Spring

In September, Wade Spring's 'Super Loop' and 'Fishmouth' springs were recognised with FIRA Gold, which followed on from their Gold Certification for their 'Zig Zag Sinuous Springs' achieved in March 2016. This was bolstered by two further awards in November for their 'Recliner Springs, 4.00mm Full Arc Kinked Medium Loop' and 'Recliner Back Springs 10G/3.25mm Super Loop'.



Wade Spring

Imperial Office

In October, Imperial Office were awarded FIRA Gold for Installation for Office and Contract Furniture. To achieve FIRA Gold Installation for Office Furniture, Imperial Office were subject to an in-depth audit to ensure they could demonstrate their installers are suitably qualified, and that all necessary procedures, documentation and quality standards are in place.



Vitafoam Ltd

Vitafoam Ltd received FIRA Gold Product Certification for four products from their 'Reflex' foam filled cushion range - Reflex R340, Reflex R340S, Reflex R400 and Reflex R400H. Alongside results of physical pounding tests, the factory audit highlighted the quality of their manufacturing processes, with good traceability systems in place alongside a continuous improvement programme.

Siddall & Hilton Products Ltd

In November Siddall & Hilton received FIRA Gold Product Certification for their Zig Zag Springs: FPG S042. As part of the testing process the springs were subject to durability tests which ran for 200,000 cycles. During the audit, Siddall & Hilton's quality assurance was highlighted as a strength.

www.fira.co.uk/gold

On the Horizon

What can you expect to see from the Research Association in 2018?

Knowledge

The full Statistics Digest Report (see page 6) was released in January, acting as a barometer for the furniture industry. Members will further benefit from exclusive Quarterly Standards Updates. These are currently scheduled for release in March, June, September and December. This is in addition to ad-hoc updates following standards meetings as they are held throughout 2018.

Information

Improvements to www.fira.co.uk will continue throughout 2018. The site hosts all of the Research Association's information, which is available to all employees of member companies. If you are an employee of a Research Association member who does not currently have a login to the site you should contact marketing@fira.co.uk, the team will then be able to arrange access for you.

Research

As part of the Research Association's work within the Circular Economy, a draft Remanufacturing Product Standard should be out for consultation in 2018 as much of the behind the scenes work is now complete.

Following on from the Bariatric Chair Standard published by the Research Association seen in 2017 (see page 13), a Bariatric Bed Standard is planned for 2018 publication.

The Research Association Council has granted extensions to scope of some of the work seen in 2017. This includes continued research on how decabromodiphenyl ether (decaBDE) impacts the furniture waste stream – the outcome of which may inform future action by the industry or Government.

Completed project work on electrically actuated furniture will be extended to incorporate kitchen furniture and the implications for retailers and fitters.

Work is also planned around the General Product Safety Directive (GPSD), to address potential knowledge gaps in how they relate to other legislation and specific product Regulations, for example children's furniture.

Ergonomics experts are working on two projects, the first to understand the correlation between pressure mapping and comfort; the second to extend the range of design guides to cover kitchen design (complementing the domestic and non-domestic furniture design guides already published).

Influence

Through the Research Association's role within the British Furniture Confederation (BFC), members' views will be represented as the main projects around apprentices and training, and the proposal for updating the Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended) continue. www.britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk will be updated as work progresses throughout 2018.

The confederation will also be keeping a weather-eye on possible Brexit outcomes, and Research Association members will be given updates and predictions as and when these are possible.

Membership

The Research Association also plans to continue to grow via membership by building on the good work from 2017. Additional resources generated from new members will be used to deliver further knowledge, information and research across the furniture supply chain.

At the time of writing (December 2017) initial planning was underway for the Research Association's annual reception. The event provides a great opportunity for FIRA to celebrate everything that members, and the wider furniture industry, contribute to the society and the economy.

Three Open Days are also planned at FIRA International, based in Stevenage. The events taking place in February, May and October are a great opportunity for members (and non-members) to learn more about the work of the Research Association and their commercial partner, FIRA International.

Make the Most of Your Membership

Utilise all the Benefits

Alongside the benefits of knowledge, information, research and influence, there are further ways to make the most of your Research Association membership.

Member website access

It's crucial to make sure that all those within your member organisation have a login to the website (www.fira.co.uk). By having a login, colleagues can access all of FIRA's knowledge, research and information. Any employee of a member company can get a website login, so if you require a login, or know of a colleague who does, email marketing@fira.co.uk.

Member's Directory Listing

All member organisations have a company profile on www.fira.co.uk/directory. This can be a valuable shop window for a member company, driving sales enquiries through the website, so it's worth checking this is current as it's where others will learn more about you. Your main contact for the Furniture Industry Research Association membership can amend the profile if required.

Share your news

www.fira.co.uk/member-news is a dedicated area where you can share your latest press releases and news. We then post these via our social media channels to help you reach a wider audience.

www.fira.co.uk/jobs

Members can advertise job vacancies on www.fira.co.uk/jobs. Roles are highlighted through the Research Association social media channels and eNews - helping members reach a different audience.

FIRA Showcase

Members can exhibit their products as part of the 'FIRA Showcase' within our reception area. Previous displays include all types of domestic and contract furniture including seating, tables, desks, mattresses, storage units, wardrobes and children's play equipment. www.fira.co.uk/showcase includes details of current exhibitors.

FIRA Open Days

Members who want to learn first-hand about how to make the most of their membership are encouraged to attend a FIRA Open Day. The 2018 Open Days are scheduled for February, May and October - but early booking is advised as the popular events often reach capacity with a waiting list in place.

Using the membership logo

The Furniture Industry Research Association membership logo is available for members to use on their website, marketing material, exhibition stands etc. It highlights to others you're part of the Research Association and committed to raising standards across the furniture industry.



Email marketing@fira.co.uk to find out more on all the opportunities to make the most of your Research Association membership.



House of Lords Reception. September 2017



FIRA International Ltd

As the exclusive service provider to the Research Association, FIRA International offer a wide range of services across the global furniture supply chain including:

- Testing
- Consultancy
- Training
- Furniture aftercare

Furniture Industry Research Association members: don't forget that 20% (excluding VAT) of membership fees for full members are converted into 'voucher credits' which can be redeemed against FIRA International services including testing, consultancy and training!

Contact FIRA International for testing, consultancy, training and furniture aftercare:

info@fira.co.uk
+44 (0)1438 777 700

