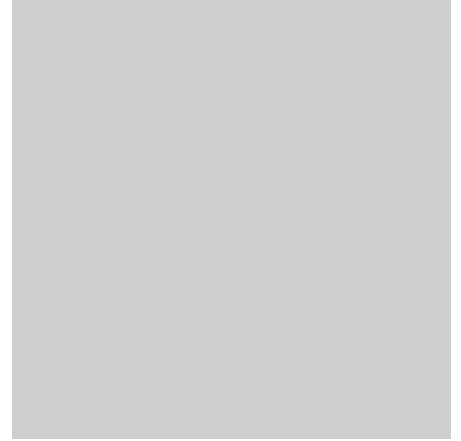
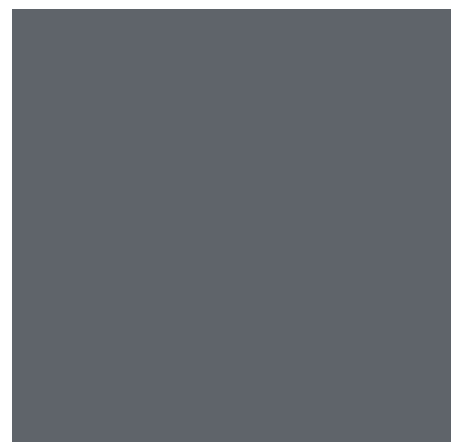
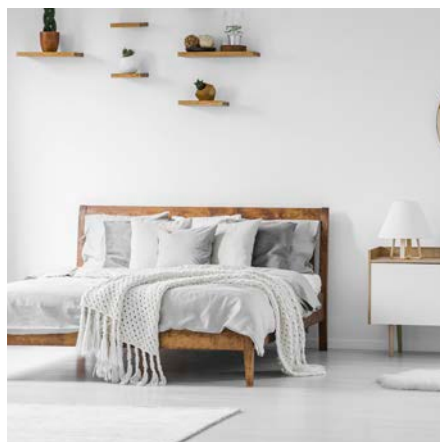
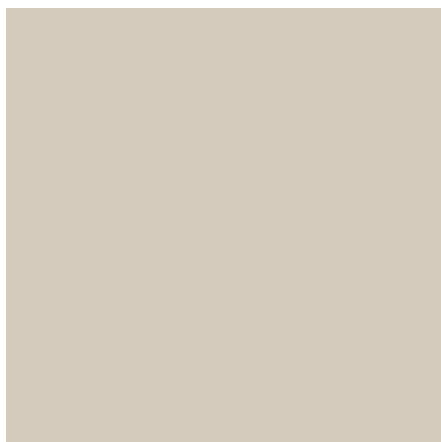


2020 REVIEW

And looking to 2021



The centre of
knowledge for
the furniture
industry



Meeting challenges

2020 will leave a legacy far beyond the close of the year. We all faced challenges both personally and professionally, and I'd like to take this opportunity to review the work of the Furniture Industry Research Association over a turbulent 12 months.



We're closing 2020 after welcoming 9 new members to the FIRA family. But whilst we welcomed we also said a fond farewell, most notably to our Chair, Charles Vernon, who after four years at the helm of the Council announced in January that he would be stepping down in the September. Charles' initial tenure was two years, but we were fortunate to have him in post for much longer. He did a tremendous job steering the Research Association through some difficult times for the furniture sector, bringing both energy and dynamism to the role. However, I am delighted that the Council unanimously supported Brian Ahern in his appointment as our new Chair. On the following page you can meet Brian and learn more about his plans for 2021 and beyond.

Further Council changes in 2020 included the departure of Chief Operating Officer, Phil Reynolds, and Murray Hudson joining from Gratnells to bolster representation of the commercial sector. 37% of our members are active in the office and contract environment so it's key that they have a strong voice.

Our work throughout 2020 was very much defined by events in the wider world. As many turned to home working we produced two guides looking at the ergonomics of working from home, with a guide tailored for employers and their duty of care, and a more practical guide for employees. Many mainstream press articles around home working focused on aesthetics and creating a workplace more suited to Instagram rather than the human body. We wanted to use our expertise re-address this.

We also turned to on-demand training for the first time, with five courses developed and delivered by the experts at our service provider. These 'introductory' sessions addressing various key regulations gave freedom to members to learn at a time convenient to them, with the option of further support from the technical experts at FIRA International.

Turning to the Transition Period, we closed 2020 with a comprehensive and timely guide to the new UKCA Marking Regulation. Despite there being a 'grace period' to conform with the new Mark, I would urge all members to review the guide and start putting steps in place to ensure compliance. We've seen how unpredictable the world can be so forward planning has never been so critical.

In closing I would like to thank all those who played a part in the Research Association's year. Without our members there would not be an Association, and without our Council members, who volunteer their time, we would not be able to take the Association in such a positive direction.

It now gives me pleasure to introduce you to our new Chair, Brian Ahern.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Richardson', written over a large, light-colored oval shape.

Mark Richardson
Vice Chair
Furniture Industry Research Association

Looking to 2021 and beyond

Back in December 2020 it was a great pleasure to be elected Chair by my peers on the Furniture Industry Research Association Council. At the time of writing, late January 2021, 2020 seems like a lifetime ago, and in other ways it seems so recent.

We've entered 2021 in a way none of us expected, however I want to reassure members that they can depend on the Research Association to support them over 2021 and beyond.

Prior to being elected Chair, I served on the Council for a number of years and understand the inner workings of the Research Association very well. This enables me to start from a very solid position on which to support you.



In more 'normal' times I would have been out meeting many of you face-to-face, but for now we're relying on technology to keep us connected, which is working well. It's enabled me to still meet members and understand what they need from us as a Research Association and where they would like us to focus in terms of knowledge and technical support.

2020 demonstrated how critical it was for organisations to be agile, and the Furniture Industry Research Association is no different. One of my first objectives is to explore how accessible we, and our knowledge, is to members and identify gaps to ensure we're their focal point for research and information.

We're undertaking a data project at the moment to ensure we're reaching as many members as possible with our updates and identifying gaps to fill. This will enable us to reach you better with the latest knowledge and technical updates, rather than the onus being on members to find out 'what's new'. We've also invested in the 'knowledge hub' area of the website (www.fira.co.uk/knowledge). It now has a much better search functionality and it's easier to access related content.

I am also working with the technical experts at our service provider (FIRA International), ensuring knowledge from the 'source' is as streamlined as possible to access.

I look forward to open dialogue with you to ensure that we, and our service provider, are delivering, and to also learn what direction you wish us to take in terms of knowledge, research and information to really support your business and your role.

If you set out to do something different in 2021, why not consider a volunteer role with myself and my colleagues on the Furniture Industry Research Association Council? We meet quarterly to discuss activities, ensure we're on track in terms of deliverables, review budgets and assess new project proposals which will support members. Invitations are open to all from across the furniture industry, further details of roles and commitments are available via membership@fira.co.uk.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Ahern', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian Ahern
Chair
Furniture Industry Research Association

Supporting the industry

Training

Online recorded training sessions to help members navigate key regulations and standards covering:

- Introduction to the domestic flammability regulations
- Introduction to fire safety of furniture and furnishings in the contract and non-domestic sector
- Introduction to the REACH Regulations
- Introduction to Biocidal Products Regulation
- Introduction to the European Union Timber Regulations

Knowledge

Reports and guides published 2020:

- UKCA & UKNI marking guidance
- CE Marking toolkit
- Employers' guide to ergonomic homeworking
- Employees' guide to ergonomic homeworking

Research

Projects undertaken during 2020:

- A review into the validity of interface pressure mapping to assess perceived comfort: Guidelines for best practice

KNOWLEDGE HUB

Our Knowledge Hub, with its new look, updated content and improved search, is home to reports, publications and recorded training sessions produced by the Research Association on a range of topics, most of which are exclusive to members.

Our comprehensive standards database provides an overview of all current furniture related standards and members are also kept up-to-date on changes to standards, those in development and ones under discussion.

