Federation of Master Builders

Annual Report & Accounts 2008/9

FMB Working in Partnership

The FMB is grateful to its partner companies for their ongoing support, which not only provides members with valuable benefits and discounts, but also enables the FMB to run its Master Builder of the Year and Apprentice of the Year awards.

NISSAN

AON

B&CE Benefit Schemes

Barceló HOTELS & RESORTS

BPB British Gypsum

constructionskills

CSCS

energy saving trust

envirowise SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES SUSTAINABLE PROFITS

HBXL

HILTI

NHBC

POWER TO RUN YOUR BUSINESS sage

SCREWFIX

TP Travis Perkins

VELUX®

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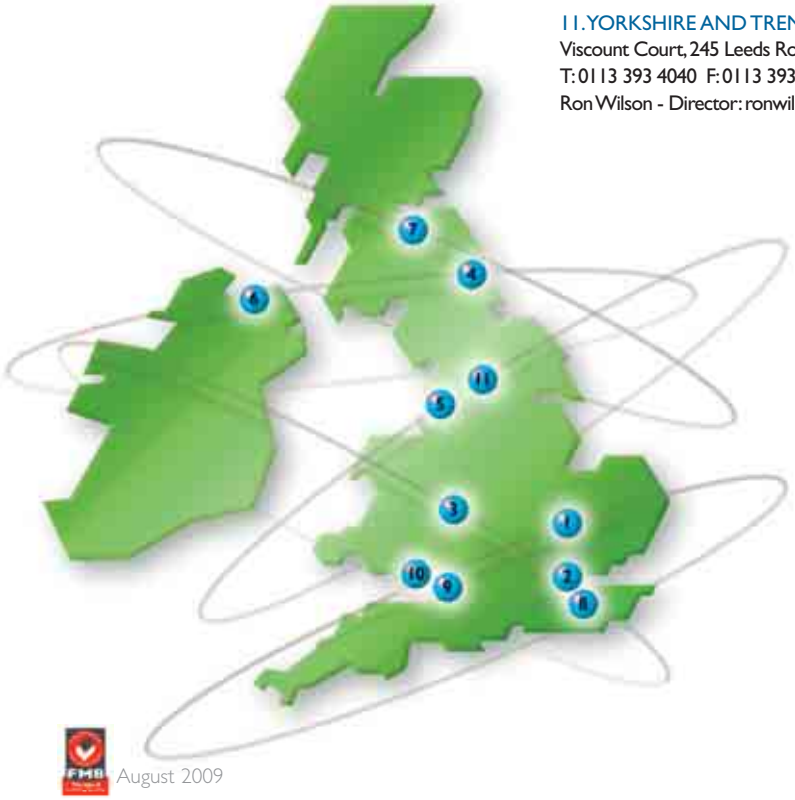


THE FEDERATION OF MASTER BUILDERS

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is the largest trade association in the UK building industry, representing around 12,000 building companies. Established in 1941 to protect the interests of small and medium-sized building firms, the FMB is independent and non-profit-making.

The FMB is a source of knowledge, professional advice and support for its members, providing a range of modern and relevant business building services to save them time and money. The FMB also offers advice to consumers via its Find A Builder website **(www.fmb.org.uk/findabuilder)**.

The FMB takes its reputation, and that of its members, very seriously. It works to lobby continuously for members' interests at both national and local levels, to protect members' interests against unnecessary or bureaucratic legislation, and to project their opinions on major policy issues.

FMB MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The FMB has strict membership criteria which building firms must meet in order to join. Once accepted members must agree to adhere to our code of practice (which can be found on our website) and must recommit annually to this when they re-subscribe to the FMB.

Building firms can also elect to join the National Register of Warranted Builders (NRWB) which allows members to offer MasterBond insurance on their projects. Joining NRWB requires firms to undergo more checks including independent project inspection.

FMB MEMBERSHIP ADVANTAGES

Membership of the FMB provides more than just a badge to enhance a building firm's professional image. The FMB provides helplines, advice, discounts, training and much more. The FMB has a department dedicated to its promotion and that of its members to the media, government and opinion formers. The FMB and its members are regularly featured in the media.

President and Chairman of National Council Introduction

Ron Storer, FMB National President

Derek Bostock, Chairman of National Council and FMB National Vice-President

We are pleased to report that 2008 was another busy year for the FMB with a wide range of activities designed to support members. The year will also be remembered as the start of the global recession and it was clear as the year progressed that the downturn was badly affecting many FMB members. This report highlights the FMB's work over the last 12 months and the role we have played as the National President and Chairman of National Council during that time. We hope you enjoy reading it – it tells an important story about how your money has been used to help you.

We took on our roles in the middle of 2008 and would like to take this opportunity to give our thanks to Geoff Lister who completed his two year period as National President in September. Geoff remains a valued member of the Presidential team as Immediate Past-President and we are both grateful for his continued support and advice. Jim Gilmour has joined us as a Vice-President. He is the first member of the Presidential team from Scotland in the history of the FMB and we are delighted that this lengthy oversight has now been corrected.

David Croft completed his two-year term as President of the European Builders' Confederation (EBC) at the end of 2008. We would like to thank David for his work in this role, where he has ensured that the interests of small builders were made clear to policy makers in Brussels.

Your National Council, Management and other committees met regularly throughout the year to oversee the development and monitoring of policy and decisions; all of these meetings were well attended. The FMB depends on the input of members at local, regional and national level if it is to be effective. The support of colleagues prepared to give up their time to attend and contribute to discussions is greatly appreciated. Sadly, several long serving members of National Council have retired during the course of the last year. We would like to pay particular thanks to Gordon Marjoram (Midland and former National President), David Marriott (Southern), Jack Emanuel (Southern), Trevor Hole (South West), Pat McGeever (Midland), Cormac MacLynn (Northern Irelend) and Alan Baker (Northern) who have passed on the baton to new colleagues.

"The FMB depends on the input of members at local, regional and national level if it is to be effective."

There have been many highlights during the past year. Master Builder of the Year 2008 was a fantastic showcase for our industry. The launch of the Building a Greener Britain campaign demonstrated the contribution members could make to ensure our world has a sustainable future. For the first time in many years we were able to take our message to the centre of decision making at a meeting with the Prime Minister.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the work done by the FMB's staff. Without the hard work of our Director General, Richard Diment, and his team none of this would have been possible.

Ron Storer
FMB National President
Derek Bostock
Chairman of National Council and FMB National Vice-President

Director General's Introduction

Richard Diment
FMB Director General

"The work that has been put into raising the FMB's profile over the last couple of years means that our views are widely sought."

The last year has been challenging but very exciting. The impact of the economic downturn, particularly when it turned into a recession in the second half of the year affected many members and in turn impacted on the FMB. The speed and depth of the fall resulted in very disappointing financial results but the FMB retains a strong balance sheet and is well placed to offer strong support to members individually and collectively as the economy improves.

During the year I enjoyed meeting many members at events around the country. I also had the privilege of representing the FMB at a range of events. The work that has been put into raising the FMB's profile over the last couple of years means that our views are widely sought. On a personal level the opportunity to put our case directly to the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and to the Leader of opposition, David Cameron, were highlights and demonstrated that FMB is taken seriously. Similarly the invitation to meet with the European Union Taxation Commissioner, Lazlo Kovacs, to discuss VAT on Repair, Maintenance and Improvement works was another illustration of our growing influence.

Handling complaints against members will never be easy but the introduction of our new Independent Adjudication Scheme, run in partnership with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), has been an excellent step forward. Coupled with the centralisation of our complaints service in Leeds, the process has been streamlined meaning that vexatious complaints are quickly identified and dismissed whilst genuine ones are handled fairly and in a far more timely manner.

The MasterBond warranty products have been updated with the support of a new and highly respected insurer, Zurich. Members and their clients now have a growing range of products that can be matched far more closely to their individual needs.

This year we have also improved our Master Builder magazine and our website. Both have been enhanced to modernise their style and make their content more relevant to the needs of members.

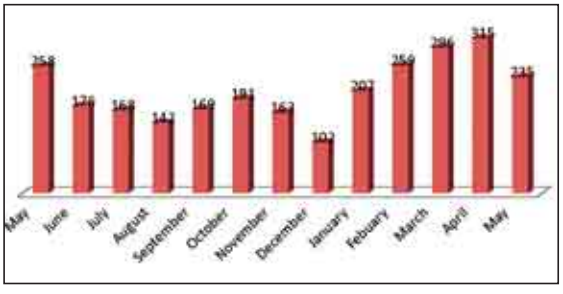
Looking to the year ahead there are finally signs that the fall in the economy may be coming to an end although it is likely to take several years before activity in our industry returns to pre-downturn levels. The FMB values your support and I hope that you will continue to work with us as the sector rises to the challenges ahead.

I would like to conclude by offering my sincere thanks to every one of the FMB's staff. Their commitment has been key to the many successes the FMB has achieved over the past year.

Richard Diment
Director General

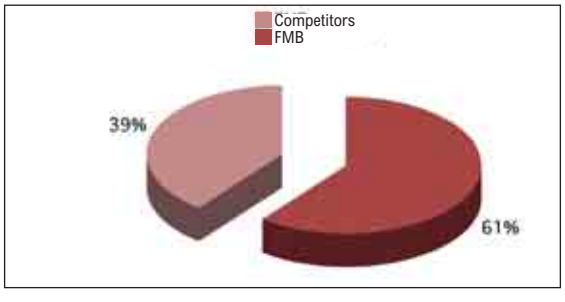
Media

Lee Goodwin, FMB member, with Daily Star girls



Quantity of cuttings

Richard Diment, Director General of the FMB on BBC news



Share of voice

Robin Hood-Leeder, Director of Membership Services at the FMB, being interviewed on Sky news

Maire Nawaz, Director FMB Northern Ireland, being interviewed on UTV

Richard Jenkins, Director FMB Wales, being interviewed on BBC Radio Wales

Brian Berry, Director of External Affairs at the FMB, being interviewed for the BBC

Media relations are key to all organisations as they determine the public face of the organisation. Effective media relations safeguard the representation of the FMB and its members. Through the media FMB members have the opportunity to show the public the quality and innovative projects that they complete.

COVERAGE QUANTITY

Between May 2008 and May 2009 the FMB was mentioned or quoted in 2,423 articles in national, regional, trade and consumer press as well as on national and regional television and radio.

SHARE OF VOICE

The FMB is just one of many trade associations, industry bodies and companies within the media sphere which is always keen to increase its media coverage, This means that often there are many organisations ready to comment on an event, subject, government announcements or such like so speed is of the essence in media relations. Fortunately the FMB is often able to act quickly and comment immediately which is why the FMB has a 61% share of voice – 22% higher than all our competitors added together!

HIGHLIGHTS

A year ago the FMB would probably have classed an article in a National newspaper or a story on regional television as a highlight, now the FMB is regularly getting this sort of coverage. Each month the FMB is featured in National newspapers, on National television and radio, in glossy consumer lifestyle magazines, in trade press, as well as being featured in regional and local coverage in newspapers and on television and radio.

Some of the notable highlights of the FMB's media coverage in 2008/2009 include:

- Richard Diment, FMB Director General, was interviewed by BBC News, Sky News, BBC Radio Four, the Today programme and BBC Radio Five Live.
- Brian Berry, FMB Director of External Affairs, spoke on the BBC One O'Clock News, BBC News, BBC "Inside out", BBC Breakfast and RTE News, Ireland.
- Regional Directors regularly interviewed on or had articles in their local, regional and national media.
- Gary Webb, London Region President, became building expert for "House Beautiful" magazine.
- FMB Member Lee Goodwin was photographed with girls from the Daily Star as part of an article about the Cut the VAT campaign.
- Neal Etchells, London Region Councillor, interviewed on the ITV 10 o'clock news.
- Dave Stowell, Wales Councillor, was regularly asked to speak on BBC Wales Radio programme, "Wales at work".
- David Croft, FMB Past President and Past President of the EBC, interviewed on the BBC World Service.

BUDGET 2009:

- Ahead of the Budget Richard Diment was interviewed on BBC News giving the FMB's view on what needed to be in the Budget. The Guardian also ran a piece ahead of the Budget with the FMB's recommendations for the Chancellor, and the Financial Times published a letter from the Cut the VAT coalition asking the Chancellor to cut VAT on home maintenance and repairs in the Budget.
- After the Budget the Financial Times, Daily Star, Guardian and Daily Telegraph all ran comments from the FMB on its reaction to the Budget.

Communications

The new look FMB website

Refreshed Master Builder journal

The weekly FMBulletin

The FMB strives to ensure that its communications with members are regular and relevant. There are many ways that the FMB communicates with its members but this year three of the key methods underwent a revamp.

FMB WEBSITE - www.fmb.org.uk

There are more than 1.5 million visitors to the FMB website each year. The FMB has always led the way with web-based communications, being one of the first trade associations to launch a service enabling potential clients to find a local FMB member.
The online Find A Builder service was launched in 1999, and 55,000 users visit the FMB website each year to verify that builders are members of the FMB, while more than 7,000 visitors download a free FMB contract every year. In 2008 it was decided that the website looked tired and out of date, so it went through a major redesign, which included the introduction of a Content Management System, allowing all FMB staff to manage and keep their sections of the website up to date.

> "There are more than 1.5 million visitors to the FMB website each year"

From a member's point of view the new website features:

- New design with improved accessibility
- New Information and Help section with more useful content for members
- New Member Benefits section with details of over twenty FMB benefits
- New MasterBond section.

MASTER BUILDER MAGAZINE

Distributed to all FMB members every month, the Master Builder magazine has been redesigned to make the content more readily accessible to members. During 2008/9 articles have reflected members' concerns about the recession with a 'Survive & Thrive' theme and 'Crunch Buster' discount offers to help members manage their businesses.

FMBULLETIN

Each week the FMB sends an email newsletter to its members and other opinion formers, politicians and journalists. The FMBulletin provides an update of what the FMB has been doing on its members' behalf that week such as meeting MPs, meeting government bodies to explain members' concerns, responding to government consultations and coverage in the media. It also updates members on new legislation, training events and industry news. This year the FMBulletin underwent a redesign, in order to make it quicker and easier for members to access the information they need. Further redesigns and the addition of a new monthly newsletter, FMBusiness which will provide members with up to the minute advice and information, along with details of events, new benefits and discount offers, are planned for 2009. Members are reminded to make sure their email address, and other contact details are up to date by visiting the new FMB members' area of the website; **www.fmb.org.uk/fmb-member-login/ or calling 020 7092 3881.**

Campaigns

Campaigners with Bob Russell MP at the Cut the VAT post card delivery

Campaigners at the Get Britain Building Westminster launch

Geoff Lister, Chairman of the Cross-Industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force with Lord Young

Robin Harper MSP speaking at the Building a Greener Britain launch

The FMB has been busy campaigning to protect and promote members' interests with a series of high profile initiatives:

BUILDING A GREENER BRITAIN

In July 2008 the FMB hosted the launch of its influential research report from the University of Oxford looking at ways that the Government should be transforming our existing housing stock to make it more energy efficient. Our conference attracted speakers from all the main parties including Ian Wright MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, Grant Shapps MP, Shadow Housing Minister, and Robin Harper MSP from the Green Party. The report's finding that the transformation of the existing housing stock is a market worth between £3.5 and £6.5 billion to the existing market for housing repair and maintenance work was used in the Government's consultative paper outlining its proposed Draft Heat and Energy Saving Strategy published in February 2009.

GET BRITAIN BUILDING

The arrival of the worst recession in living memory prompted the FMB to speak up loudly for its members and to get politicians from across the UK to recognise the importance of the construction industry to the British economy. 'Get Britain Building' with its 10 Point Manifesto was officially launched on 2nd February at the House of Commons with cross party support. The London launch was followed by 'Get Wales Building' at the National Assembly for Wales on 25th March and the 'Get Scotland Building' at the Scottish Parliament on 28th May 2009.

CUT THE VAT

After years of campaigning the FMB secured a victory within the European Union (EU) when on 19th March 2009, EU finance ministers agreed that Member States could lower the rate of VAT on maintenance and repair work to five percent if they wished. The UK Government can no longer hide behind the EU in arguing that they can't reduce VAT and marks a significant milestone in getting the UK to reduce the VAT rate to help both builders and householders wanting to maintain and improve their home.

APPRENTICESHIPS

The FMB is heading up the Cross Industry Construction Apprenticeship Task Force (CCATF) to encourage more employers to take on apprentices. Despite the impact of the recession the Task Force has been busy trying to influence government policy and raise the profile of apprentices. On 28th January 2009, Geoff Lister, Chairman of the Task Force met with Lord Young. Minister for Skills and this has been followed by further meetings with civil servants with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

> "After years of campaigning the FMB secured a victory within the EU when EU finance ministers agreed VAT on maintenance and repair work could be charged at five percent."

Lobbying

Brian Berry, FMB Director of External Affairs with Sarah Teather MP, Liberal Democrat Housing Spokesperson

Richard Jenkins, FMB Wales Director, with Nerys Evans AM

Richard Diment, FMB Director General, with Grant Shapps MP, Conservative Housing Spokesperson

(L-R) Lazlo Kovacs, EU Commissioner for Taxation, David Croft, FMB Past President and EBC Past President and Agnes Thibault, former EBC Secretary General

Maire Nawaz, FMB NI Director, with John McCallister MLA

Brian Berry, FMB Director of External Affairs, outside 10 Downing Street ahead of a meeting with Joe Irvin, Senior advisor to Prime Minister Gordon Brown

(L-R) Dr Phyllis Starkey MP, Chair of House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee and Gavin Killip, of Oxford University with Brian Berry, FMB Director of External Affairs

Grahame Barn, FMB Scotland Director, with Ross Finnie MSP

Making sure that those who make decisions know about the concerns and interests of FMB members has been at the core of the FMB's lobbying strategy. The FMB has been busy lobbying not only the UK Government but also politicians, civil servants and opinion formers across the UK and Europe.

The highlight came in November 2008 when the FMB was invited to attend a breakfast meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss ways that the Government could be helping industry. Richard Diment, Director General of the FMB, lost no time arguing for the Government to do more to help construction companies survive the recession.

Given that over 70 percent of British legislation comes from Brussels it is becoming ever more important to influence what is happening within the institutions of the European Union. Through our membership of the European Builders Confederation (EBC) the FMB interests are protected. Again FMB managed to secure high representation when David Croft, President of the EBC met with Lazlo Kovacs Commissioner for Taxation to argue the case for a reduction in the current rate of VAT which helped lead to the decision on 10th March giving Member States the authority to make VAT cuts.

The FMB have also been busy across the UK meeting politicians and ministers in all the devolved administrations and building up our presence and influence. For the first time the FMB was present at all three of the main UK party political conferences and spoke about housing policy at the Conservative Party conference.

Policy issues affecting how members run their businesses have been at the centre of our lobbying work which has included a wide range of initiatives. FMB responds to major policy consultation papers covering such issues as planning red tape, health and safety, waste, and housing policy. All these submissions have helped win influence for the FMB within government and in the case of changes to permitted development rights for householders have enabled the FMB to be directly involved with senior civil servants advising on proposed legislative changes and their potential impact on the construction market. In January 2009, the FMB gave oral evidence to the House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry into the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. Our reaction to the Budget in April 2009 attracted a lot of attention with quotes from the FMB in the Financial Times, Daily Telegraph and The Daily Star deploring the lack of help for small building companies.

"In November the FMB was invited to attend a breakfast meeting with the Prime Minister"

Membership Services

Robin Hood-Leeder, FMB Director of Membership Services

FMB at the rugby on Sky TV

FMB benefits on the website

The Construction Marketing Award won by the FMB for its Crunch Campaign

The ultimate objective of FMB Membership Services is to make FMB membership 'cost neutral' for the majority of our members. The Membership Services team aims to do this in a number of ways including the growing number of discounts that we offer members, our telephone help lines and our websites. Over the past year we have introduced several new advisory support services for the benefit of our members.

FIND A BUILDER

A key change has been to our Find A Builder service. Since its launch 10 years ago, the FMB online Find A Builder service has helped tens of thousands of potential clients to find a suitable FMB member in their area.

The FMB has responded to the challenges of the economic downturn by introducing powerful new online services to help members secure valuable new job leads. We have recently included phone numbers and members' websites on the search results pages and promoted members through a Google online advertising campaign.

The new telephone service means that when a job lead call comes through to an FMB member, they can readily tell that it came from the FMB. Since this service was rolled out, there has been an average of 4,000 calls a month to FMB members from consumers using the service. The inclusion of links to members' websites has resulted in 9,000 client visits every month to FMB members' own websites.

Other enhancements to the existing Find A Builder service:

- Members can now select up to ten trades
- Members can nominate a 'centre of operations' postcode if they work in a different area to where their office is based
- Potential clients can see members contact details directly on the search results pages, without having to request a Member List.

SPECIAL FMB BENEFITS AND OFFERS

The FMB provides a wide range of benefits and offers to its members through its partners.

The recession brought fresh challenges for members and the FMB responded by negotiating a series of special discounts with its partner companies. These provide FMB members with a wide range of savings relevant to their business needs:

- Insurance cover
- New and used vehicles
- Stationery
- Construction software
- Hotels
- Training.

FMB PROMOTING MEMBERS

When it comes to the Crunch

The FMB is accustomed to handing out awards each year, so it was a nice surprise to receive one for a change! The FMB 'Crunch' campaign won the Best Use of Direct Marketing category in the 2008 Construction Marketing Awards. This award recognized the success of the FMB's first campaign aimed at attracting new members, which took the credit crunch as its theme. This trade campaign was followed by the consumer 'Crunch' campaign, with the theme 'When it comes to the crunch experience counts'.

Sky TV

This year the FMB also tried something different, taking advertising space at cricket and rugby super league games. The FMB adverts will be seen by 1.5 million Sky viewers when they watch their favourite sports.

"The FMB has responded to the challenge of the economic downturn by introducing powerful new online services."

Research and Information

FMB Year Book 2009

One of the many information sheets available on various subjects throught the website or by calling Research and Information

Research and Information advice is available on the FMB website

INFORMATION SERVICES

You need a licence to carry waste

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 there is a duty of care to ensure that waste is handled safely and in accordance with the law. The duty of care has no time limit, it extends until the waste either has been finally and properly disposed of or fully recovered.

One of the monthly articles in Master Builder from the Research and Information department

The FMB Research and Information department has a vital role in helping members to understand and deal with the constant growth and the endless changes in the rules, regulations and red tape that impact on the operation and profitability of their businesses.

The FMB is able to offer technical and business advice on a range of subjects. Our Research and Information department receives around 6,000 telephone enquiries from FMB members and consumers every year. Use of this service is completely free to FMB members and covers:

- Company law
- Employment law
- Legal and contract issues
- BATJIC wage rates
- Technical advice and building regulations
- Tax, PAYE and VAT
- Health and Safety
- Copyright
- Construction products and materials
- Debt recovery
- Credit checks
- Environmental issues including waste management.

FMB members also benefit from free professional consultancy from external specialists providing advice on a wide range of issues including employment law, debt recovery and health and safety. This year a new FMB taxation helpline was introduced and now offers FMB members extensive advice on all taxation matters as well as residential rating for show homes, aggregates levy and planning gain. This year 2,500 FMB members benefited from our specialist consultancy advice.

The Research and Information department also provides support to other FMB departments and to the Regional Offices. A 'News Alert' service has been introduced to ensure that FMB staff are kept up to date with the latest developments and news in the Construction Industry.

FMB members can access help from the FMB Research and Information department on 020 7242 7583 or through the FMB website at www.fmb.org.uk/information-and-help/.

"Our Research and Information department receives around 6,000 telephone enquiries from FMB members and consumers every year."

Master Builder of the Year Awards

Celebrating the Master Builder of the Year 2008 in Master Builder

FMB Director General, Richard Diment

Part of the fantastic Master Builder of the Year 2008 celebrations

Master Builder of the Year 2008, Kevin Ellis with Naomi Cleaver

Channel 4's Naomi Cleaver

FMB National President, Ron Storer

The FMB's annual Master Builder of the Year awards celebrate the high quality of work that comes out of the successful partnership between builders and their clients. Our awards are open to the whole industry and are unique in that only satisfied clients can nominate their builder. The quality of the entries clearly demonstrates that Britain's builders regularly impress and delight their clients.

This year's winners were announced by Channel 4's Naomi Cleaver (Trade Secrets) to an audience of 500 clients, builders and industry opinion formers at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London in November 2008.

New for 2008 was the award for Investment in Workforce Training and Development. This, together with the Apprentice of the Year award, further demonstrates the importance that the FMB attaches to construction workforce training and skills.

Three of the national winning projects have appeared on television, along with the builders and their clients. The regional and national award winning projects are frequently selected to appear in consumer self build magazines. The media always shows a particular interest in the 'heavenly builder' and apprentice categories, but this year saw an unprecedented increase in coverage of the Energy & Sustainability category, with a stream of articles about 'Britain's greenest builder'. There were 500 articles in broadcast media, national and regional press about the Master Builder of the Year awards, reaching 33 million people. A total of six million viewers were reached through television coverage of the awards. The total financial value of media coverage to FMB was £500,000.

"The total financial value of media coverage to FMB was £500,000."

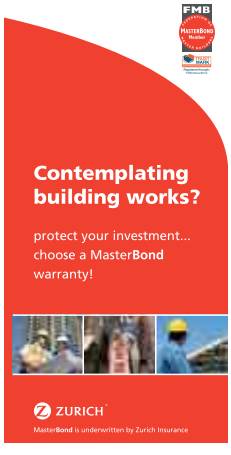
The winning builder, Kevin Ellis of Ellis and Hughes, drove away in the Nissan vehicle of his choice, a Nissan Navara worth almost £20,000. As well as getting a very public platform to thank their builder, Kevin's clients Patrick and Elaine Mulvihill went on a £3,000 holiday. The winning apprentice, Matthew Bracken, won £1,000, while other national category winners went on luxury weekend breaks at Barceló hotels.

The awards not only benefit the FMB and its members, but also the FMB partner companies that support the awards every year. The FMB is very grateful for this support, without which this event would not be possible.

A Busy Year at NRWB

Sadie Morris, MasterBond Manager, at an FMB exhibition

David Hill, Director of FMB MasterBond



MasterBond affords security and peace of mind for consumers

The National Register of Warranted Builders (NRWB) has undergone significant change over the past year and the MasterBond brand has grown and developed into an instantly recognisable group of products that afford security and peace of mind for consumers.

Although the register suffered some losses in membership due to the current economic climate, a steady recovery is in progress and it is hoped that the increased selection of products and services offered by the NRWB will sustain this growth and increase the potential for membership still further. The aim of the NRWB is to become a one-stop-shop for all members' warranty needs and next year will see the portfolio of products cover all aspects of construction whether it is a bathroom refit or a multi-storey office development.

Access to the register has been adjusted so that a sensible risk management programme can be implemented. Membership therefore becomes meaningful and the MasterBond badge worthy of display. Members of the register enjoy significant visual benefits on the Find A Builder website, they have certificates from our independent inspectors to qualify their work and they are considered to be better builders as a result. NRWB continues to provide products to meet the needs of consumers and these are a valuable aid to members' own marketing strategies.

This year the NRWB has launched the core MasterBond 2, 6 and 10 policies which directly replace the old MasterBond product. A bespoke grant aid warranty has been introduced for Northern Ireland together with comprehensive publicity material which includes an easily updated members' register and a CD of information for the consumer. Publicity material is available to members and consumers totally free of charge and NRWB believes that this marks the beginning of a partnership approach with the membership whereby success can be enjoyed by both parties when each compliments the other.

It isn't just the product that has received attention over the past year. The NRWB organisation itself has been streamlined to realise the potential from its existing staff and to ascribe proper responsibilities and purpose to the NRWB team. NRWB also has a new Director, David Hill. David has been with NRWB as a claims investigator for a number of years but is now combining this role with that of Director. The small revolution that has taken place has been constructive, informative and it will ensure that the team is able to meet the challenges ahead as NRWB moves forward into its second year of development.

"This year the NRWB has launched the core MasterBond 2, 6 and 10 policies which directly replace the old MasterBond product."

Around the UK

Ron Storer, FMB National President, Gavin Napper, winner of the FMB sponsored Construction High flyer award and Kate Adie OBE, reporter.

Members of the Birmingham branch hand over the keys to the new minibus to SPOCC

Maire Nawaz with members of the Northern Ireland Assembly

Northern Branch Secretaries with Northern region Director. Front row left to right: Eileen Charlton (Hexham & District), Maureen Heads (Tynemouth & District), Lucy Baker (South Durham & Cleveland), Back row left to right: George Ramsey (Bishop Auckland), Barry Robinson (Sunderland & Morpeth), Regional Director & Newcastle Branch Secretary Barry Oliver.

A loft conversion

The FMB is the only building trade association that has offices across the UK, including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland plus nine offices in England. Our network of offices are able to provide help and support locally. They also organise workshops, training and social events.

Here the Directors share the region or country's greatest achievement or success in 2008/2009:

EASTERN

One of the highlights for the Eastern region this year was sponsoring the Award for High Flyers at the 5th annual East of England Construction Training awards in October 2008. The awards celebrate excellence in construction training in the Eastern Counties. The guest speaker was Kate Adie OBE, who along with FMB National President Ron Storer, presented Gavin Napper with the FMB sponsored Construction High flyer award.

LONDON

The Loft Group is a London Region initiative, the first Special Interest Group (SIG) within the FMB, and is supported by ConstructionSkills. Under the Chairmanship of John Longworth, the Loft Group aims to raise the standards of management and customer service including planning and development. The Group provides a wealth of guides which can be downloaded from the website. They include 'Satisfying Customers without Extra Cost', 'Management Check Lists', 'Sub-Contractor Performance Records' and 'Working on Sites – Good Practice'. The Loft Group has played an important role within the FMB to secure recent changes to permitted development rights to make it easier for householders wanting a loft conversion or extension. The London Region plans to set up other SIGs over the coming months.

MIDLANDS

A great 12 months for the Midland Region saw Leicester Branch member Ellis & Hughes become the nation's best builder by scooping the Federation's overall Master Builder of the Year 2008 title. Birmingham is officially the region's best branch having been selected by Regional President, Arthur McArdle for its fantastic charity fund raising work leading to the presentation of a fully funded Mini Bus to the 'Society of Parents of Children with Cancer' (SPOCC).

NORTHERN

Northern has always been fortunate to have active branches. Throughout the year nine of our 10 active branches held regular meetings. Regional Director Barry Oliver said "Northern is very grateful to our Branch Secretaries without whom we would not be able to run the many branch meetings that our members actively engage in".

NORTHERN IRELAND

FMB Northern Ireland was invited to meet the First Minister, Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuiness to discuss strategies to help kick start the construction industry in Northern Ireland. The FMB put forward five main points which it believes would revive the industry, these include tackling the existing housing stock, reducing VAT on home maintenance and repairs, simplifying the planning system, reforming stamp duty and reforming the procurement process.

Andy Provan, FMB Scotland President; Ronnie Pennycook, Scottish National Council representative and Jim Gilmour, FMB Vice President

Surrey Branch Chair Keith Tarling with youngsters at the Surrey Education Business Partnership Event in Leatherhead in February 2009

Winners of the Master Builder of the Year and Apprentice of the Year in the South West

Richard Jenkins, Director FMB Wales, with Kirsty Williams, Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats

Frances Shaw, FMB North West Regional Director, with FMB members at the Building Foundations Project.

NORTH WEST

November 2008 saw the conclusion of the Building Foundations Project which culminated in the launch of the booklet "5 Simple Steps – A Guide to Business Improvement" which had been developed and written in conjunction with employers involved in the project. Run in conjunction with ConstructionSkills, the project delivered a programme of workshops to improve and develop business performance across the North West. So successful was the project that ConstructionSkills is now rolling it out nationally.

SCOTLAND

The "Get Scotland Building" launch at the Scottish Parliament was an opportunity for industry to put its case to decision makers and a cross party panel of four MSPs who took questions from the audience. More than 50 FMB members and guests listened and questioned the MSPs on their respective parties' policies. 'Get Scotland Building' is a coalition of organisations from within the construction industry that are calling for the creation of a new business environment to help the Scottish construction industry thrive and prosper in these difficult times.

SOUTHERN

Southern Region this year held many popular training workshops including:

- Employment Law Workshops, where ACAS updated members on the changes to disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Asbestos Awareness Workshop which delivered essential training in identifying asbestos and how to reduce the risks of working with this hazardous substance
- Corporate Manslaughter and a working at height workshop, in partnership with the London & South East Working Well Together Health & Safety Initiative. Southern members were also involved in a number of events for the benefit of the local community including the FMB Surrey Branch's support for the Education Business Partnership event in Leatherhead aimed at encouraging local youngsters to think about a variety of careers in construction.

SOUTH WEST

Delighted members and their clients received the regional Master Builder of the Year awards at the South West Regional Awards ceremony held at The Cleve Hotel and Country Club on September 24th, 2008. The Region inspected 29 projects for the 2008 competition and was also delighted to have received 11 nominations for the Apprentice of the Year category.

WALES

This year FMB Wales successfully petitioned the Welsh Assembly Government to make representations to the UK Government to reduce the rate of VAT on building repairs and improvement work to existing buildings. FMB Wales has been campaigning for this change in VAT for quite some time and it has been top of Richard Jenkins', Director FMB Wales, agenda since taking up post last year. Richard said: "I am delighted that the Welsh Assembly has followed the lead of the Scottish Parliament in calling on the UK Government to make these changes. It also follows on from meeting I have had with AMs including the Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, Kirsty Williams."

YORKSHIRE AND TRENT

During the last year the Yorkshire and Trent region have successfully run four workshops on the new discipline and grievance procedures as well as a Management and Supervisory Development Project, with £230,000 of funding from ConstructionSkills. This year Yorkshire and Trent also took on managing the FMB's centralised complaints office, which has been successful in resolving complaints/disputes quickly and effectively resulting in fewer regional complaints committee meetings and consequently fewer appeals to the National Appeals Committee.