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GETTING THE GROUNDWORK RIGHT

Nic Collins, Head of Sales, Flooring at Sika UK, looks at some of the common challenges contractors face when preparing a floor and shares his advice...

Read more on page 12.

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COVER STORY

12. GETTING THE GROUNDWORK RIGHT
Nic Collins of Sika UK tackles common floor preparation challenges and shares advice on choosing the right solution and treating the floor as a complete system.

REGULARS

04. WHAT'S NEW?
The latest company news and product launches from across the flooring industry.

FEATURES

14. DESIGN MEETS COMPLIANCE
Elmira Magomedova of Altro explores how considered specification can create accessible, visually appealing healthcare bathrooms and wet rooms.

24. HOT STEPPER
From warmer wood tones to statement parquet patterns, Luxury Flooring reveals two trends that are predicted to have lasting power.

SMOOTHING COMPOUNDS

16. THE OPTIMUM CHOICE
Neil Sanders of F. Ball explains why general-purpose floor smoothing compounds should be the go-to choice for many applications, while highlighting when specialist formulations are beneficial.

FLOORING IN EDUCATION

20. EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK
Junckers outlines the DfE's new requirements for sports and multi-purpose flooring in schools and what they mean for specification.

UNDERLAY & ACOUSTIC SOLUTIONS

27. UNDERLAY, UNDERLAY
Matthew Haestier of Direct Flooring Online discusses the best types of underlay for different rooms and applications.

REFURBISHMENT

30. WARMTH & DEPTH
Havwoods introduces its Auburn colour collection of warm brown wood flooring designed to bring natural character and versatility to residential and commercial interiors.



Welcome to the October issue of Tomorrow's Contract Floors.

September has been a busy month for the flooring industry, and it was great to head over to Harrogate for The Flooring Show and see such a strong turnout. There was a real buzz around the show, with plenty of familiar faces, new products to explore and, perhaps most importantly, lots of opportunity to catch up with people from across the industry.

We'll be bringing you a full review of The Flooring Show in our November issue, including some of the key launches, trends and highlights from the event. For now, though, there's plenty to get stuck into in this month's issue.

In our Smoothing Compounds feature, F. Ball considers when to use general purpose products and when specialist formulations are beneficial, while Mapei looks at the practicalities of repairing and sealing cementitious screeds.

Education is another focus this month, as Junckers explains what the Department for Education's latest requirements mean for the specification of sports and multi-purpose flooring in schools.

On the design side, we look at some of the latest trends in wood flooring, from Luxury Flooring's warmer tones and parquet patterns to Havwoods' new Auburn collection. We also explore how acoustic performance is helping to create quieter, more comfortable homes.

There's also plenty of practical advice for contractors, including guidance on choosing underlay for different applications and preparing floors for refurbishment.

As ever, we hope you enjoy the issue.

Sarah Robinson, Editor

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GOVERNMENT LISTENS TO CFA AND MEMBERS ON FLOORING

In the wake of Grenfell, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government is reshaping how the built environment workforce is trained, recognised and held accountable. Its call for evidence, 'Strategy for the Built Environment Professions, Trades and Occupations', asked 79 questions spanning the full building lifecycle, from design through to occupation and maintenance.

Flooring rarely gets a seat at tables like this. Subcontracted deep in the supply chain, our sector knows the realities of risk transfer, retention withholding and price-led procurement all too well. So, in August 2026, the Contract Flooring Association submitted its own response, shaped by direct member experience, covering design and specification, site conditions, competence and accountability.

Richard Catt, CEO, said: "We argued against blanket statutory licensing and instead made the case for building on what already works: CFA membership, the CSCS framework, and proportionate, sector-recognised competence schemes. We asked government to recognise trade bodies like ours as delivery partners, not to duplicate what already exists.

"This is exactly the kind of work CFA does on members' behalf: engaging with government, building the evidence base, and making sure flooring's voice is heard before decisions are made, not after.

"Members are seeing more of this work first, including the detail behind our submission, briefings from Build UK and the CLC, and the chance to help shape our position as the strategy develops. If you're already a member, look out for more in the members' area.

"If you're not, this is exactly why it's worth joining. When policy decisions get made, CFA members are in the room, briefed early and able to influence the outcome, not simply told about it afterwards."

www.cfa.org.uk

HEADLAM GROUP ENTERS ADMINISTRATION AS RESTRUCTURING BEGINS

Headlam Group has entered formal administration, with administrators continuing to trade the business while implementing a restructuring plan following a period of significant financial pressure.

Will Wright, Chris Pole and Ryan Grant of Interpath were appointed as joint administrators to Headlam Group plc and its trading subsidiary HFD Limited on 8 September, following the company's notice of intention to appoint administrators on 1 September.

The administration is intended to provide time to stabilise operations and pursue a comprehensive restructuring. The proposed plan is expected to include a Company Voluntary Arrangement (CVA), refinancing of the group's existing debt facilities and a programme of cost reductions. Subject to stakeholder support, Headlam intends to seek restoration of its suspended listing.

As part of immediate cost-cutting measures, 28 trade counters have closed, with 154 employees made redundant. The remaining 48 trade counters and all 17 distribution centres continue to operate. Prior to the restructuring, the group employed more than 1,300 people.

The group said challenging market conditions, significant losses and projected short-term losses meant it was unable to implement its transformation plan within the constraints of its available funding. It had also exhausted the liquidity available under its existing financing arrangements, resulting in breaches of its month-end financial covenants.

Will Wright, UK CEO at Interpath and joint administrator to Headlam Group plc, said: "Headlam is a well-established British company with a heritage stretching back more than 30 years, and the feedback we've received from customers and suppliers in recent days reinforces that there remains market demand for the business.

"Our immediate priority is to those employees whose roles have been lost as a result of today's site closures. We understand this is devastating news and we are committed to ensuring that everyone impacted receives the support and information they need as quickly as possible.

"For the rest of the business, our focus is on implementing a restructuring that will give Headlam the best chance possible of recovery. Subject to the ongoing support of the Group's key stakeholders, including customers and suppliers, we believe the proposed plan provides a credible path to stabilising the business."

The future structure and scale of the group will become clearer as the administration and restructuring process progresses.

www.headlam.com



KARNDEAN DESIGNFLOORING STRENGTHENS COMMITMENT TO FITTER TRAINING WITH APPOINTMENT OF NEW TRAINING ACADEMY MANAGER



Karndean Designflooring has appointed Dean Dickinson as training academy manager, reinforcing the brand's ongoing investment in education, skills development and the future of the flooring industry.

The appointment comes as Karndean continues to expand its training offering following the recent refurbishment of its dedicated Karndean Training Academy, alongside the introduction of an enhanced training programme designed to support both new and experienced floorlayers.

With almost three decades of hands-on flooring experience, Dean brings a wealth of practical knowledge to the role. Having started his career as a fitter's mate at the age of 17, he progressed through a variety of residential and commercial flooring roles before establishing his own successful luxury vinyl tile (LVT) flooring business. More recently, he was recognised as NICF LVT Fitter of the Year, further cementing his reputation within the industry. For Dean, the move into training represents a natural progression.

Dean Dickinson, training academy manager at Karndean Designflooring, said: "I have always wanted to move into teaching and pass on the knowledge and skills I've learnt throughout my fitting career. Many fitters progress into sales or estimating, but that was never the direction I wanted to take. Helping develop the next generation of fitters felt like the right path for me."

Dean's appointment reflects growing demand for skilled floorlayers and increasing recognition across the industry of the importance of professional training.

"Good floorlayers are difficult to find and I'm excited to help support the next generation of fitters", said Dean. "LVT remains hugely popular and will continue to be an important flooring category for many years to come, so it's vital that we continue developing existing fitters' skills while supporting new people entering the trade. I enjoy sharing the knowledge, techniques and small tips I've picked up over nearly 30 years, especially when they help make difficult jobs easier."

Following the launch of his own flooring business in 2020, Dean continued to invest in training through industry-recognised organisations, while also competing in national flooring competitions. After reaching the final of the NICF LVT Fitter of the Year competition in 2021, he returned in 2023 to claim the title.

The refurbished Karndean Training Academy has been designed to provide a modern learning environment where fitters can develop their technical skills through hands-on training led by industry professionals. Courses cater for a range of experience levels, from those completely new to LVT installation through to experienced floorlayers looking to master more advanced techniques.

The enhanced programme covers a variety of installation methods, subfloor preparation, design features and best practice guidance, helping fitters build confidence while ensuring consistently high installation standards.

Richard Allen, VP of sales at Karndean Designflooring, said: "Training plays a vital role in maintaining standards across the flooring industry. Dean's extensive fitting experience, passion for the trade and commitment to supporting others make him the ideal person to lead the next chapter of our training programme.

"The recent investment in our Training Academy reflects our long-term commitment to supporting retailers and fitters alike. By providing high-quality training, we're helping develop skills, build confidence and support the future growth of the industry."

Looking ahead, Dean is eager to help shape the next generation of flooring professionals. He said: "The flooring industry is constantly evolving, which is what makes it so engaging. There's always something new to learn. Seeing a fitter grow in confidence or master a technique they've struggled with is incredibly rewarding. I'm excited to help share the knowledge I've gained throughout my career and play a part in supporting the future of our trade."

Courses can be booked online at **karndean.com**, with Dean's first programme of courses already available to reserve. Upcoming sessions include, Level 3 on 5 October and Heritage Collection Abstracts training on 9 November.

www.karndeancommercial.com



FIND THE RIGHT UNDERLAY WITH FLOORWISE

With so many options – material, density, thickness, comfort, recovery and more – finding the right underlay can be a minefield. It can leave your customers confused and missing out on the ideal underlay, and see you frustrated and losing valuable additional income.

Yet when you make floorwise your underlay of your choice all the confusion and frustration is left behind. With a comprehensive range for any situation and marketing materials that make everything crystal clear, floorwise is the easy way to finding the ideal underlay for every customer.

Across luxurious memory foam with the new Lumiere collection to a comprehensive assortment of PU foam underlays for domestic and commercial installations, felt, rubber, wood and laminate underlays, and underfloor heating options, as well as the Feel the Difference premium range; floorwise has everyone's underlay need covered.

Richard Bailey, managing director of floorwise, said: "We're one of the UK's biggest underlay brands with one of the biggest advantages – the buying power and freedom to specify unique underlays from the world's best manufacturers to make sure we deliver customers quality and value in every roll."

floorwise has developed marketing materials that make choosing the right underlay from its extensive range easy for everyone. Nowhere is this better shown than in the PU foam collection. With 31 different options, there's an impressive choice made easy through a range of densities, comfort and durability scales and the bouncebackability rating.

This clear and simple ratings system is at the core of floorwise's PU foam collection and appears widely on sampling and literature, making it a consistent feature that's easy for consumers to understand and which lets them make a selection based on the level of durability, comfort and long-term performance they need. The star ratings (one to six) are employed for all densities, from the affordable Medium Density Plus up to Mega Density Plus available in the new PowerForce contract-ready underlays.

www.floorwise.co.uk



COMPACT SHEET VINYL FLOORS THAT WON'T LET YOU DOWN

With a durable 0.70mm wear layer and a Hyperguard+ low maintenance finish, IVC Commercial's European-made compact sheet vinyl floors are ready to take on the busiest environments. School and work canteens, healthcare corridors, classrooms, hotel back of house, trampoline and soft play parks, retail megastores and more; there's very little these floors can't tackle.

In Iperform 70 these projects can benefit from IVC Commercial's most feature-packed compact vinyl floor. Not just durable and easy to maintain, but with better appearance retention thanks to Performance Barrier, more hygienic because of Sanitec anti-bacterial protection, and available in 60 designs; Iperform 70 turns ultra-durable flooring into a stylish addition that performs day in and day out.

Adriatico 70's 3D chip effect is a classic commercial vinyl look that's available in six colours. The looks may be classic, but performance is anything but: Hyperguard+ makes tricky maintenance a thing of the past, 16dB of impact noise reduction achieves quieter spaces and a 0.70mm wear layer ensures Adriatico 70 stands up to the heaviest of footfall.

Both Iperform 70 and Adriatico 70 are available in two and four-metre widths to reduce seams and cut down on wastage and are fully compatible with IVC Commercial's Invisiweld technology. Delivering an invisible join that's stronger and less prone to failure, Invisiweld creates a seamless effect and more natural looking wood plank and herringbone designs. They are also suitable for hot welding with coordinating weld rods available.

So, next time you need a compact sheet vinyl floor that's not going to let you down, make sure you choose IVC Commercial, available direct or at your local trade counter.

www.ivc-commercial.com



NEW ALTRO OCEANIS BRINGS THE BEAUTY OF NATURE TO BATHROOM FLOORS

Altro Oceanis is an innovative new safety floor solution inspired by the timeless elegance of nature and expertly engineered for bathrooms and wet rooms. Designed to unite natural aesthetics with practical performance, Altro Oceanis offers the warmth of natural wood, stone-effect and mineral designs, while benefiting from trusted slip resistance in high-risk environments. Set to revolutionise wet room and bathroom design, this fresh new range was driven by customer feedback wanting style without compromising safety, and it delivers that even in challenging wet and dry conditions.

Drawing on the calming influence of biophilic design, Altro Oceanis features a range of visually striking options inspired by nature, and brings a sense of tranquillity and comfort to any space, whether residential or commercial, while maintaining Altro's renowned standards for slip resistance and durability.

Altro Oceanis is constructed with added comfort, and a smoother surface underfoot, making it a pleasure to walk on even in bare feet. The finish enhances the user experience, while its decorative versatility means it complements interiors from contemporary spas to accessible bathrooms, wet rooms and family homes.

Altro Oceanis is easy to clean and maintains reliable slip resistance in both wet and dry conditions, and is suitable for shoe and barefoot use, ensuring ongoing safety without compromising on design. It features Altro's advanced Altro Easyclean technology, delivering industry-leading cleaning performance for safety flooring. This makes Altro Oceanis simple to maintain while ensuring exceptional hygiene standards. Wet slip resistance exceeds PTV 50+ and is guaranteed for the lifetime of the floor.

Inspired by nature, Altro Oceanis is ideal for both residential and commercial settings where comfort, safety and style are equally important.

- Natural wood, stone-effect and mineral options
- Comfortable, smoother surface underfoot
- High design, inspired by nature
- Safe and reliable in bathrooms, showers, and wet rooms
- 14dB impact sound reduction to help reduce noise transference
- Easy to clean and maintain

With Altro Oceanis, you no longer have to choose between safety and style, you get both. This new collection is set to transform wet rooms and bathrooms into spaces where comfort, visual appeal, and peace of mind go hand in hand.

Pair with Altro walls for the complete bathroom solution. For inspiration click **here**, and to hear from the people behind the development of Altro Oceanis, click **here**.

www.altro.com







AVOID UNSEEN PROBLEMS IN SOCIAL HOUSING FLOORING WITH BEAUFLOR

By providing floorcoverings in all rooms of social housing, providers can achieve a reduction in void rent loss, a 50% reduction in void turnover and a £500 per property reduction in void costs, says the Longleigh Foundation report, The Provision of Floor Coverings in Social Housing. Yet, the same report also highlights that one-fifth of landlords still rip-out floorcoverings for all new lets.

The removal of existing floorcoverings is often carried out because of concerns around health and hygiene, safety, and ongoing maintenance and responsibility. But with Beauflor cushion vinyl flooring, landlords and providers can alleviate many of these worries, ensuring the costs associated with voids are minimised.

Because of its resilient sheet format, Beauflor cushion vinyl is a seamless, hygienic, and durable floorcovering. Easy to maintain using household cleaning methods, it upholds its appearance throughout use and can be easily assessed for its condition and hygiene at end of tenancy. In effect, Beauflor cushion vinyl flooring has 'nothing to hide', making it ideal as an ongoing flooring proposition in social homes.

Chris Roberts, regional sales manager UK & Ireland, said: "When social homes are left 'floorless' many tenants decide upon carpet in their new home, but this can cause providers problems at changes of tenancies. While they may appear fine at first glance, they can often harbour hidden problems with flea infestations and other hygiene-related issues not uncommon. Therefore, many providers are left with no other option than to rip them out at void to alleviate any issues in the future. But leaving exposed floorboards and subfloors can also bring its own issues – safety concerns and a property that's harder to let."

By specifying Beauflor cushion vinyl in all rooms, providers can ensure a floor that makes it possible to assess condition at the end of tenancy and with resistance to water ingress and nowhere for dirt or other potential issues to hide, it also eliminates the worry of unseen flooring problems making trouble in the future.

www.beauflor.com



THE WONDER OF WOOL

This October is Wool Month where the natural, renewable and biodegradable fibre is celebrated in carpet stores across the country. For independent retailers selling Causeway Carpets, it is the perfect chance to highlight the brand's unique wool and wool-rich loop pile textured carpets that offer style, comfort and exceptional longevity.

Found in the Natura and Endura collections, these wool styles bring a wide range of inviting loop pile textures and colours, crafted from fibre to floor in quality pure wool and wool blends to be an enduring and lasting natural carpet choice for today's homes.

Across 10 different ranges, homeowners can enjoy the resilience and comfort of wool when choosing a new carpet for their home. From elegant, textured linear stripes in Mayfair Rib & Linea to the rustic, chunky loop of Country Life & Style; there is a wool texture for every taste. Colours too have been thoughtfully considered, with naturally toned palettes that are in touch with contemporary styling.

The Mayfair range is the perfect expression of Causeway's approach to its wool ranges. Recognising the uniqueness of British design sensibilities, this new carpet comes in refined and elegant colourways and in four textured styles of Mayfair Rib, Mayfair Linea, Mayfair Weave and Mayfair Texture. Each offers an exquisitely crafted carpet that brings homes a luxury touch. And using a heavyweight four-ply yarn, Mayfair's textures are not only beautiful but also enduring, staying defined and elegant throughout.

Richard Moore, commercial director for Causeway Carpets, said: "Wool is at the heart of the Causeway Carpets brand, and our ranges demonstrate this beautifully. Diverse and with the quality you would expect from a family-owned business with a 90-year history, every wool carpet from Causeway Carpets is made in Portugal by Lusotufo and is testament to the beauty, resilience and longevity of this natural fibre. They are an investment that homeowners will enjoy for many years to come."

www.causewaycarpets.com



BUSTING MYTHS ONE FLOOR AT A TIME

Did you know that many people still imagine vinyl floors to look cheap and unrealistic? In this latest chapter in Quick-Step's Myth buster series, the company looks to dispel this and other misconceptions about vinyl tile and plank flooring.

In an online survey of 1,200 people in the UK by Quick-Step that asked about their opinions about different flooring types, some surprising misconceptions about vinyl flooring were revealed. The leading brand is encouraging retailers to challenge consumer perceptions and become part of a band of flooring myth busters.

According to respondents, who all took part in an online questionnaire, vinyl flooring has its upsides and downsides. Worries about quality, stain and scratch resistance, installation and not looking very natural, where all reasons for not thinking about vinyl as a floor for their home. On the upside, many people believe it to be easy to clean, good looking and comfortable.

With Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl flooring many of the worries of homeowners highlighted in the survey are nothing more than a myth, so let's bust them one at a time:

VINYL FLOORING IS EASY TO SCRATCH AND STAIN

In the early days, vinyl flooring was easy to scratch and stain, but things have taken a huge step forward. Now Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl has superior protection from scratches, stains, dirt and scuff marks thanks to its sealed top layer with Stain and Scratch Guard technology.

VINYL IS COSTLY AND MESSY TO INSTALL

While stick-down vinyl floors are not without their drawbacks, Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl features an integrated underlay and Uniclic installation for fast and simple fitting. The fast and easy way to a great looking vinyl floor.

VINYL DOESN'T HAVE THE QUALITY I WANT

Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl comes with a lifetime warranty so quality is never an issue. What's more, Alpha Vinyl is also 100% waterproof, thanks to Quick-Step's innovative Hydroseal technology that makes the floor entirely watertight.

VINYL DOESN'T LOOK AS GOOD AS A NATURAL FLOOR

The glossy, shiny and flat look of vinyl is banished with Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl. The natural knots, woodgrain and stone indentations are so authentic you'll have to look twice. Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl also has an authentic depth structure and gloss and matt nuances that makes its surface look just like the real thing.

THE FLOOR DOESN'T CONTAIN ANY RECYCLED CONTENT

We have the certification to prove it does. In fact, every Alpha Vinyl floor with integrated underlay features a minimum 25% pre-consumer recycled content, independently certified by SCS Global Services (SCS-R-20324). Since day one, waste PVC from within production has been used and now the Recover programme is also collecting from other industries, as well as installation off-cuts and old floors. Since it began, Recover has been used to ensure unwanted PVC from both pre-consumer and post-consumer sources are used all new vinyl flooring from Quick-Step.

Now these common myths have been busted, it's clear that Quick-Step's Alpha Vinyl flooring is an ideal choice for homes wanting a floor that's easy to install and easy to live with, all while looking just like natural wood or stone. So, next time a customer is a little unsure about whether vinyl flooring is right for them don't forget that Quick-Step helps you bust myths, one floor at a time.

www.quick-step.co.uk



MODULEO ROOTS: NEW DESIGNS STILL THE SAME GREAT QUALITY

For 2026, Moduleo Roots has been transformed, bringing homes its signature approach to mix and match design with a fresh portfolio of coordinating styles. With a wide palette of colours and formats, the new Roots elevates its status as a collection that promotes freedom to build coherent, flowing interiors, lifting any space beyond the ordinary.

The new wave of Roots designs is anchored in current and emerging interior trends, with a focus on the UK and Irish customer's preference for cosy, warm tones that complement traditional and contemporary homes. The range is comprised of wood plank, stone tiles and herringbone in soft neutral beiges, blends of grey and beige, timeless mid-tone honeys and deeper warm rich browns.

Designed and made in Belgium, the new Roots collection comprises new designs alongside established favourites, each delivering the premium quality and refined aesthetics you have come to expect from Moduleo. Each plank and tile reveals lifelike textures and detailing, capturing the natural essence of wood and stone. Beyond its exceptional looks, Roots is designed to be felt as much as it's seen. Warm to the touch and pleasantly quiet, every floor softens sound and daily life, bringing comfort and calm to the home.

Built to keep up with life, every Moduleo Roots floor offers an elegantly simple way of living. Water, stain and scratch resistant, and so simple to maintain even in busy family homes, the quality of Moduleo Roots is undeniable. In fact, Moduleo is so confident in the quality of Roots that it offers a lifetime warranty on every plank and tile.

Niall Cassidy, retail manager at Unilin Flooring UK, said: "With the new Moduleo Roots, we're redefining the design proposition to make the range more accessible and to reassert its position as a luxury vinyl flooring collection for customers that want to create a unique and personal atmosphere in their home. While the collection offers exciting new ways to design flooring across four new themes, we've retained the quality of craftmanship that went into every floor before it. Designed and made in Belgium to ensure a floor that's ready for a lifetime of living, the new Moduleo Roots collection is a very exciting one ."

Of course, Moduleo hasn't overlooked the sustainability of its new Roots collection. Made with at least 24% pre-consumer recycled content certified by SCS Global Services, new Moduleo Roots can also be installed with Moduleo's Flex Pro Pure self-adhesive underlay for a floor that can be reused or recycled at end of life.

Moduleo retailers will be showing off the new Roots collection from this autumn.

www.moduleo.com/en



FLOORCOVERING NVQ TRANSITION



Shaun Wadsworth, CFA Deputy CEO, explains how a 24-month transition to the new Level 3 Floorcovering NVQ will give employers, training providers and the wider industry time to prepare.

The Contract Flooring Association (CFA) welcomes the decision to introduce a 24-month transitional arrangement for the new Level 3 Floorcovering NVQ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The CFA, through its management team and member representatives, has been actively involved in the Floorcovering National Working Group throughout the development of these changes. The Group's work has gone wider than the new NVQ structure alone, covering the review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS), development of the future qualification structure, and discussions with the wider floorcovering sector about how best to manage the transition.

The review of the NOS established a clear direction of travel towards Level 3 as the minimum qualification level for floorcovering. The resulting qualification structure was intended to provide a more consistent and robust approach to occupational competence, with the existing Textile and Resilient pathways ultimately being brought together into a single combined Level 3 pathway.

While the Working Group supports this long-term objective, discussions with employers, training providers and other stakeholders identified a real concern: the sector was not ready to move immediately from the current Level 2 structure, which has three separate pathways (Textile, Resilient or Timber), to a Level 3 structure with only two, one of which is the new combined Textile and Resilient route.

The Group therefore agreed that a managed transition was necessary. This was not a change in the long-term ambition, but a recognition that the industry, training providers, awarding organisations and employers needed sufficient time to prepare for the new structure and ensure that learners were not adversely affected by an abrupt change.

The resulting 24-month transitional arrangement provides that breathing space, without changing the agreed destination. It allows existing Level 3 pathway arrangements to continue temporarily while the sector prepares for full implementation of the combined Textile and Resilient Level 3 NVQ.

It is important to distinguish this transitional arrangement from the withdrawal of the Level 2 Floorcovering NVQ, which has been confirmed with immediate effect. The transition period is not a continuation of the Level 2 qualification. Rather, it recognises the need for a managed progression between the existing qualification arrangements and the future Level 3 structure.

The Scottish floorcovering qualification is not part of this transitional arrangement and already operates at the equivalent of Level 3. While there have been updates to reflect the revised occupational standards, this does not change the delivery model for floorcovering qualifications in Scotland.



For the CFA, this is part of a much wider piece of work on competence within the floorcovering sector. The Working Group's efforts also support its engagement with CITB's competence frameworks, helping to align occupational standards, qualifications and the competence expected of the workforce.

The CFA believes that qualifications must reflect the skills required by industry while also providing employers and learners with clear and achievable progression routes. A qualification structure can only be successful if the sector is able to implement it effectively, which is why the transition period is so important.

The 24-month period will provide an opportunity for awarding organisations, training providers and employers to adapt their delivery arrangements, communicate the changes and prepare the workforce for the combined Level 3 pathway. Regular review points, including a formal review after 12 months, will allow progress and industry readiness to be assessed and any necessary support or adjustments to be considered.

The CFA will continue to work with CITB, the Floorcovering National Working Group, awarding organisations, training providers and employers throughout this process.

The direction of travel is clear, a consistent Level 3 qualification structure, with Textile and Resilient ultimately combined into a single pathway, supporting a more flexible and competent floorcovering workforce. The transition period is the practical route to achieving that objective, giving the industry the time it needs to make the change properly.

www.cfa.org.uk



GETTING THE GROUNDWORK RIGHT

Nic Collins, Head of Sales, Flooring at Sika UK, looks at some of the common challenges contractors face when preparing a floor and shares his advice on getting the preparation right, choosing the right solution and looking at the floor as a complete system.

Getting a finished floor to look perfect starts long before the final floorcovering goes down. From uneven substrates to tight project timescales, there's plenty for flooring contractors to think about when it comes to preparing a floor and choosing the right solution for it.

START WITH THE SUBSTRATE

The first place to start with a floor is looking at what's underneath it. Even the best-looking floorcovering will only look so good if the surface below hasn't been properly prepared, leaving unforgiving bumps, dips and other imperfections visible through the final surface.

So, before deciding which smoothing compound to use, it's important to take a proper look at the substrate itself. Concrete, sand/cement screeds, calcium sulphate screeds, timber panels and existing finishes can all behave differently, needing different preparation and products to ensure a flawless finish. Then there's the actual condition of the floor surface to consider as well. Cracks, contamination, movement or old adhesive residue can all affect what needs to happen next and how the end result will look.

Moisture is another common issue. On a busy project, there can be pressure to get the floor finished and following jobs moving, sometimes while the building is still drying out. If residual moisture is present, however, simply covering it up can create problems later, including blistering, lifting or adhesive failure. Products such as Sika Primer MB Rapid can help where residual moisture is an issue. The solvent-free, one-component primer is quick drying, can be used across a wide variety of substrates and is also suitable for use with underfloor heating.

Looking at these types of issues and taking the time to understand what you're dealing with at the start of the project means the right preparation and products can be chosen around the actual conditions on site, giving you a much better final finish when the time comes.

FINDING THE RIGHT SOLUTION

Once you know what you're dealing with, the next step is choosing the right levelling solution for those conditions, and there isn't necessarily one compound that will be the right answer for every floor. Application depth and drying time, the substrate itself and the final floorcovering, can all influence the choice. Underfloor heating, adhesive residues and damp-proof membranes may need to be factored in too.

Timings will also play a huge role in things, with some projects needing the floor to be ready quickly so that the next stages of work can get underway, while others might need a product with particular properties because of the substrate or installation requirements. Ease of use matters as well. Products that are straightforward to mix and apply can help floor installers work efficiently and reduce the opportunity for errors, while rapid drying options can help get the floor ready for the next stage sooner.

Sikafloor-4020 FiberLevel, for example, is a fibre-reinforced product, based on hybrid chemistry, creating a rapid-setting levelling compound that can be applied from 3mm to 20mm. It's ready for foot traffic after around two hours and some floorcoverings can be installed after just six hours, depending on the application, making it a great option for projects with compressed timescales.

LOOKING AT THE BIGGER PICTURE

But choosing the right self-levelling compound is only part of the picture. It's important to think about everything else that makes up the floor and how it all works together too, especially as there isn't a one size fits all approach when it comes to flooring. Different substrates, site conditions and different floorcoverings will need different products, so it's important to choose each part of the floor and build it up around the job in question. At the same time, those products shouldn't be looked at in isolation. Primers, levellers, adhesives and the final floorcovering all need to work together as one complete system if you're to achieve the best finish and help the floor perform as it should.

This is where the breadth of Sika's flooring offer comes in. Sika provides specialist primers for different substrate types, levelling compounds for different application requirements and adhesives for resilient floorcoverings, giving contractors access to products across the floor build-up rather than one part of it alone. For example, SikaBond-150 Premium Floor is a versatile adhesive for full surface bonding of floorcoverings including vinyl, linoleum, carpet and rubber.

GETTING IT RIGHT ON SITE

Choosing the right products is one thing, but getting the application right on site matters too. When timings are tight, there can be pressure to keep things moving, but an installation that has to be taken up and redone ultimately means more materials, more money and labour, more waste and another hit to the programme.

Following the manufacturer's guidance on areas such as mixing ratios, working time and application thickness is key. It can be tempting to do things a little differently on site when time is tight, but changing the way a product is designed to be used can affect its flow, strength and curing.

ASK THE EXPERTS

Of course, there will also be times when contractors need a bit more guidance, particularly when they're dealing with an unfamiliar substrate or more complicated project requirements. In those situations, having access to someone who can offer advice and help work through the options can make a real difference. That's why Sika has dedicated flooring specialists on hand to offer technical and specification advice, alongside training and support out in the field. Contractors can get help working through the requirements of a particular job and finding the right flooring solution, especially when site conditions or project requirements are a little more complicated.

There's plenty of wider experience behind that support too. Sika is an established name across the construction industry, developing specialist systems and products used across a broad range of building and infrastructure applications, and continues to invest in research, product development and technical expertise.

For flooring contractors, that means the flooring offer from Sika comes with 60-plus years of wider construction experience behind it too. While the products themselves are designed specifically for flooring, they're backed by the knowledge and expertise of a business that works across the wider construction industry.

Ultimately, it's about looking at the floor as a whole and having the right products, knowledge and support to get every stage of the job right.

Want to find out more? **Pre-register** for Sika's forthcoming webinar on this very subject.

www.sika.co.uk/selflevelwebinar







BUILDING TRUST



DESIGN MEETS COMPLIANCE

Elmira Magomedova, creative designer at Altro, explains how colour, contrast and considered specification can help create healthcare bathrooms and wet rooms that are both fully accessible and visually appealing.

For healthcare specifiers and designers, creating accessible bathrooms and wet rooms that meet compliance requirements while delivering an attractive, welcoming environment can often feel like a balancing act.

Research shows that healthcare design can have a significant impact on patient wellbeing, staff satisfaction, and the overall user experience. As healthcare environments evolve, there is growing recognition that practical, hygienic spaces can also be contemporary, calming, and design led.

DESIGNING WITH VISUAL CONTRAST

Visual contrast is one of the most important considerations when designing healthcare bathrooms and wet rooms. A 30-point LRV difference is also required under Approved Document M of the Building Regulations for adjoining surfaces in new-build and major refurbishment projects. In addition, BS 8300 recommends this level of contrast as best practice to help create more accessible and inclusive environments for everyone. While these requirements are essential, they shouldn't be viewed as a barrier to good design.

COMPLIANCE DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN CLINICAL

There is often a perception that accessible healthcare design results in stark, institutional spaces. In reality, thoughtful colour selection can achieve the required LRV contrast while creating environments that feel welcoming, premium, and modern.

To demonstrate this, at Altro we've developed a range of healthcare bathroom and wet room concepts that achieve a 30-point LRV difference between Altro walls and floors while showcasing contemporary colour palettes. These designs show how colour can be used confidently within healthcare settings without compromising on accessibility guidance.

From soft, nature-inspired tones to richer accent colours, designers have more flexibility than ever to create spaces that support both wellbeing and compliance.

LOOKING BEYOND WALLS AND FLOORS

While achieving the correct contrast between floors and walls is an important starting point, accessibility should be considered holistically.

Ceilings, sanitaryware, grab rails, fixtures, fittings, and accessories all contribute to the usability of a space. Careful consideration of contrast throughout the environment helps ensure clear visual definition and supports the needs of all users.

While our concepts focus on achieving a 30-point LRV difference between Altro walls and floors, we recommend reviewing the LRV values of all surrounding elements to help create a fully accessible healthcare environment.

By combining evidence-based healthcare design principles with thoughtful colour selection and robust product specification, healthcare bathrooms and wet rooms can achieve the ideal balance of accessibility, hygiene, durability, and visual appeal, proving that compliant spaces can still feel clean, contemporary, and inspiring.

You can explore our carefully curated colour combinations for bathrooms and wet rooms developed by the creative team at Altro in our healthcare design manual for bathrooms and wetrooms here. If you need something tailored to your project, get in touch for more support.

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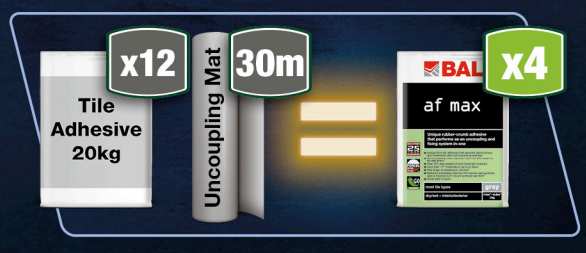


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THE OPTIMUM CHOICE

The application of a suitable floor smoothing compound helps to ensure a surface that is free of imperfections for the installation of floorcoverings. While formulations with specialist features are often advantageous, or even highly recommended, general-purpose options should be the 'go-to' for many situations, explains Neil Sanders, technical director at F. Ball and Co. Ltd.

F. Ball recommends the application of a smoothing compound as part of any flooring installation to create a smooth base to prevent subfloor imperfections affecting the appearance of the finished floor, as well as optimising the bond between the flooring adhesive and the subfloor.

Our technical service department will often advise flooring contractors to consider using a specialist smoothing compound. These products have been developed to provide a long-lasting, professional flooring finish, as well as to optimise the installation process, in particular situations.

FAST-TRACK APPLICATIONS

Examples of when it will be advantageous to use a specialist smoothing compound include working to tight timescales.

The fastest-drying products are walk-on hard from just 30 minutes after application and ready to receive floorcoverings in as little as 45 minutes later. Another development that has sped up subfloor preparation is the arrival of smoothing underlayments that can be applied directly over old adhesive residues, eliminating the need to spend valuable time mechanically removing them.

"The best choice depends on the conditions and requirements of the project."

When it comes to preparing floors that will be subject to heavy loads or high levels of foot traffic, a heavy-duty smoothing compound should be selected for its high compressive strength, which will ensure that installations can withstand this kind of treatment for years to come.

OTHER SITUATIONS

The application of a smoothing compound that is designed to accommodate slight movements or flexing in the subfloor is recommended when working over subfloors of steel. These products are reinforced with tiny fibres that maintain the integrity of the smoothing compound when subject to minor subfloor movement as a result of normal foot traffic or temperature fluctuations.

When working over electrical wired or water-fed underfloor heating systems that are increasingly installed over subfloors as part of new-build or refurbishment projects, it is advisable to allow at least 15mm of a special-purpose smoothing compound above the pipes to avoid hotspots and ensure its structural integrity.

EFFICIENT SOLUTIONS

Where contractors are working over subfloors in a good condition, perhaps in multiple areas, such as new-build developments, and they don't require advanced features, such as suitability for use over adhesive residues or flexible substrates, general-purpose smoothing compounds are often the best choice. Apart from being a cost-effective option, the ease with which some formulations can be applied helps flooring contractors to work quickly and efficiently.

For example, F. Ball has drawn upon the latest cement formulation technology to create a 'best-in-class', high flow smoothing compound: Stopgap 1400.



The two-component smoothing compound has superior self-smoothing properties, is walk-on hard from just 90 minutes after application and ready to receive floorcoverings from 12 hours.

Stopgap 1400 can be applied between 2–10mm thick to a wide range of absorbent and non-absorbent primed subfloors, including sand/cement and calcium sulphate (e.g. anhydrite) screeds, concrete, granolithic, sound asphalt, terrazzo, epoxy and polyurethane resins, ceramic and quarry tiles, as well as Stopgap waterproof surface membranes. Furthermore, its low-odour, protein-free formulation allows it to be used in biologically sensitive areas.

INITIAL PREPARATIONS

Before a smoothing compound is applied, always make sure that the subfloor is suitably sound, smooth and dry enough for the receipt of subfloor preparation products and floorcoverings. This should include the removal of any surface contaminants. There are also situations where additional preparations, such as the application of a repair compound, will be required to achieve a perfectly smooth base – where sand/cement screeds are mechanically damaged, for example.

A subfloor moisture test should be undertaken as part of any flooring installation. Where relative humidity (RH) levels within the subfloor are above 75% (65% if installing bonded wood floorcoverings), the application of a waterproof surface membrane will be required to prevent excess subfloor moisture attacking adhesives and floorcoverings, potentially leading to floor failure. The application of a primer is also recommended in almost all circumstances prior to installing a smoothing compound.

After these steps have been undertaken, the application of an appropriate smoothing compound is the final stage in the subfloor preparation process before new floorcoverings can be installed.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

F. Ball's technical service department is on hand to answer questions about subfloor preparation and floorcovering installation, including the best smoothing compound for a particular situation. They are contactable by phone, as well as by contact form and a new live chat facility on F. Ball's recently redesigned and relaunched website.

https://f-ball.com/en





FAST FIX FOR SCREEDS

Mapei explains how its Eporip SCR provides flooring contractors with a fast, easy-to-use solution for sealing and repairing cementitious screeds, ready for levelling compounds and adhesives in as little as 45 minutes.

Designed for the fast sealing and repair of cementitious screeds, MAPEI's Eporip SCR offers flooring contractors a practical, easy-to-use solution for screed repair and preparation. Combining rapid application with fast curing, the urethane-silicate resin can be used to repair cracks, joints and minor damage, allowing levelling compounds and flooring adhesives to be applied within an hour.

Supplied in two pre-measured components, Eporip SCR is designed for simple preparation on site; Component A is poured into the bottle containing Component B and shaken to mix. After approximately two minutes, the resin can be applied directly through the bottle nozzle, eliminating the need for separate mixing equipment.

"Fast application, rapid curing and no separate mixing equipment."

Eporip SCR is suitable for sealing and stitching cracks and joints in cementitious floors and screeds, fixing strips, profiles and casements, securing anchoring bolts and dowels, and for the rapid bonding of concrete, ceramic and natural stone tiles.

The resin offers excellent screed penetration and provides a strong bond with fast hardening. Application can also be adapted to suit the repair: when used straight after mixing, the fluid consistency penetrates fine cracks effectively, while waiting three to five minutes creates a higher viscosity suitable for bonding and for filling wider joints.

Odourless and solvent-free, Eporip SCR is EMICODE EC1 Plus-certified for very low VOC emissions, helping to create healthier environments for both installers and end users. Levelling compounds and adhesives can be applied after approximately 45 minutes. Once cured, the resin is resistant to castor wheel traffic in accordance with EN 12529.

www.mapei.co.uk



GO WITH THE PROFLOW

Kerakoll discusses its Proflow smoothing compound range, highlighting the right solution for every substrate, application and installation timeframe.

Kerakoll's smoothing compound range is composed of five products designed to deliver a flawless surface finish whatever the combination of substrate and covering. The collection includes single – and double-component products, all but one of which are moisture tolerant and can be used to pre-smooth green or wet cement-based screeds prior to applying a surface epoxy damp proof membrane.

Proflow Smooth is an easy-to-apply self-smoothing compound with a unique free-flowing formulation that fills and smooths any substrate imperfections and creates a flawless surface finish effortlessly. With working and wet-edge times of 30 minutes, it can accept foot traffic after only 90 minutes and floorcoverings after just 3.5 hours, offering the best blend of extended working times and rapid installation.

"The right solution can deliver a flawless finish, whatever the substrate."

Proflow Finish is a true all-rounder, moisture tolerant and suitable for use in any installation, on any substrate and with any type of resilient flooring at depths of up to 60mm. It is a single component self-smoothing compound with a free flowing formulation, a 30-minute wet edge time, and is able to accept foot traffic and floorcoverings after 3.5 hours. It also has an EC1-Plus GEV Emicode rating.

Proflow MVS incorporates a built-in moisture vapour suppressant barrier that is effective up to 95% RH, removing the need for a separate moisture barrier. This condenses what could potentially be a three-product application into a single application. The rapid-setting product allows foot traffic after 90 minutes while still offering a 30-minute wet edge time.

The other two products are Proflow Rapid, a double-component smoothing compound that can be used below a DPM and is perfect for fast-track installations where time really is at a premium, and Proflow Trade, the new version of Trade Flow. This universal self-smoothing compound can be used in thicknesses from 3–10 mm, on most substrates.

More information on the range is available on the Kerakoll website. You can also contact your local Sales Representative, or the customer service team to arrange a trial or have any questions answered by calling 01772 456831 or emailing info@kerakoll.co.uk.

www.kerakoll.co.uk







EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Installing sports and multi-purpose flooring in schools? Junckers provides a straightforward guide to the DfE's new requirements and what they mean for flooring specification.

Earlier this year, the Department for Education released a new construction framework for schools being built or refurbished in the next six to eight years. The new regulations affect how architects and main contractors design and build and what products they can specify. As a flooring professional, it will be beneficial to know what type of sport and multi-purpose flooring is required for each situation, and can also enable you to advise specifiers on selecting the right option to help them meet the new environmental limits and targets for the whole building.

A few years ago, the DfE made area elastic flooring compulsory in all school and educational buildings' sports and multi-activity halls. They offer the best in terms of safety, longevity, performance and cost for all types of sports, PE, dance, performance and multi-use. There are two categories of area elastic floors that are approved by the DfE: classes A3 and A4 of the European standard BS EN 14904:2006 'Surfaces for sports areas – indoor surfaces for multi-sports use –Specification'.

The differences between the A3 and A4 categories lie in the shock absorption and vertical deformation. An A4 floor has higher shock absorption and is therefore more sprung, with greater vertical deformation, meaning the flooring surface bends more.

Area elastic floor systems can be used with underfloor heating and strengthening to cope with heavy loads such as retractable seating systems or machinery. In addition to the stipulation for area elastic floors, there are several new requirements in the DfE's technical specification manual that affect sports and multi-purpose flooring selection and installation.

FLOORS USED WITH FF&E

Perhaps most importantly, the new design rules state a new, specific requirement for the type of floor to be used with Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E). For any schools built or refurbished under the new construction framework, floors for multi-purpose halls, sports halls and activity studios where FF&E is used within the space must be timber floors. This includes retractable seating, desks and chairs for when the hall is used for exams, dining furniture, as well as machinery. The type of timber allowed is maple, beech or oak; solid hardwood or engineered wood that has a minimum hardwood veneered surface of 6mm. Vinyl floors are only allowed for use in dedicated dance and activity studios with no FF&E use.

EMBODIED CARBON LIMIT

There is also an introduction of a maximum embodied carbon limit. As a flooring contractor, you might wonder how this will impact your work – what is embodied carbon and why does it matter? Embodied carbon is the energy consumed to extract, refine, process, transport and fabricate a material, product or building. Embodied carbon and operational carbon, the energy used to run a building, make up whole life carbon.

Architects and designers started by significantly reducing the energy consumption of a building, which has a direct impact on the building's environmental impact. In the last few years, those working at the forefront of sustainable design and build have identified that when you reduce operational energy usage, the embodied carbon in a building takes on a much more prominent

role. It can represent as much as 40-70 % of a building's whole life carbon footprint. This means that reducing the embodied carbon is a very effective way of reducing a building's whole life carbon footprint. And this is the reason why government bodies, professional networks and organisations have highlighted the importance of reducing embodied carbon.

Specific to school buildings, the UK is taking steps to move closer to a net zero built environment by setting an embodied carbon limit of 550 kilograms of CO2e per square metre for new and refurbished schools. Awarded DfE contracts are dependent on meeting the embodied carbon limit. Scotland has led the way. In 2019, the Scottish Futures Trust introduced its Learning Estate Investment Programme which includes an embodied carbon limit of 600 kgCO2e/m². Since then, Scotland has applied Passivhaus principles to all new-build schools, incorporating the embodied carbon limit. Similar guidelines also exist in Northern Ireland and Wales. To meet the new limit, designers and main contractors need to select materials that are low in embodied carbon, and one of the best options to meet the new requirements is wood.

The difference in environmental terms is quite staggering. If you install a Junckers 22mm solid beech sports floor in a typical 690m² four-court school sports hall, it will contribute a carbon reduction of 9,660 kgCO2e. If the same size hall is fitted with a vinyl floor, +9,246 kgCO2e would have been released into the atmosphere. It is a persuasive argument for using solid wood. As a flooring contractor, if you have some basic knowledge of embodied carbon figures and how they impact a building's carbon footprint, you will be able to advise the client, the main contractor and the architect. The above figures used to compare are obtained from publicly available EPDs.

BIOGENIC CARBON TARGET

Another key measure introduced by the DfE is a requirement to measure the biogenic carbon content of the building. Biogenic carbon is carbon stored in biological materials, primarily wood and other plant-based materials. Plants, which of course includes trees, absorb CO2 during growth through photosynthesis. When incorporated into buildings, that carbon is stored and locked away from the atmosphere. By way of comparison, the carbon released from products made from fossil fuels is called non-biogenic carbon. Combustion of products made from oil-based plastics generates significant carbon emissions and increases global warming. This is why the DfE and other organisations are seeking to include more materials that contain biogenic carbon, such as wood. The DfE CF 25 Technical Manual outlines that designs should use natural materials to create a healthy learning environment, targeting biogenic carbon of – 20 kgCO2e/m² from sequestration (carbon capture) for the whole building.

Again, this may sound a bit too scientific and perhaps far removed from flooring installation, but when you understand how significant a contribution a humble wooden floor can make to the environmental impact of the whole building, and how by selecting a wooden floor will help specifiers and main contractors meet the new target for school buildings, it makes sense. Main contractors vying for contracts to build new or refurbish existing schools must demonstrate how they will achieve a reduction of – 20 kgCO2e/m² for the whole building. Installing a solid hardwood floor from Junckers in a 690 m² four-court sports hall will contribute a figure of – 18,699 kgCO2e to off-set the total figure for the whole building. Needless to say, by installing more wood elsewhere in the school, the figure will be even higher.

If you work in the education sector of the market or hope to start, familiarising yourself with the new regulations will help you quote for jobs with confidence. You may even find yourself in a position to be able to provide help and advice – these limits, targets and requirements are new to everyone. By demonstrating your knowledge of what is needed you are well-placed to work closely with the main contractors shaping the future of educational buildings.

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FAST-TRACK TO SUCCESS

Flooring contractors installing floorcoverings in schools, colleges and universities often face severe time constraints, frequently having to complete a project over a weekend or during a short school holiday. Fortunately, fast-track subfloor preparation and flooring installation products are now available that enable areas to be brought into use in as little as a day.

Just as with any other flooring installation, a thorough assessment of the subfloor should be completed before any work begins when installing floorcoverings in an educational setting. Its end use and other environmental factors should also be considered – floors will be expected to endure high volumes of daily foot traffic while remaining secure and hygienic for years to come. This necessitates following best practice in subfloor preparation and using suitable products.

SAFEGUARDING AGAINST MOISTURE

Excess subfloor moisture, whether residual construction moisture or rising damp, can attack floorcoverings and adhesives – it is one of the leading causes of floor failure. This can lead to the movement of floorcoverings and the growth of mould and bacteria, which can potentially cause a health risk to people in the immediate environment, as well as being a potential trip hazard. To avoid these problems, a moisture measurement test should always be conducted using a calibrated digital hygrometer before any flooring installation, in both old and new buildings.

If Relative Humidity (RH) levels exceed 75%, or 65% when installing wooden floorcoverings, a moisture management solution will be required to stop excess subfloor moisture damaging floorcoverings and adhesives and potentially causing floor failure.

Water-based moisture management systems, which are ideal for biologically sensitive school settings, are now available that create an effective barrier against residual construction moisture and rising damp where RH levels up to 95%, with a drying time of under two hours.

Further advancements in flooring technology mean that single-coat epoxy waterproof surface membranes that provide protection against RH levels as high as 98% are also available in fast-drying formulations that save valuable time.

PREPARING SMOOTH SUBFLOORS

Once it is determined that the subfloor is dry enough to proceed or a moisture management solution is in place, a smoothing compound should be applied to create a perfectly smooth surface for the receipt of new floorcoverings and prevent imperfections affecting the finished installation. In some areas of schools, colleges and universities, such as corridors, floors will be expected to receive high levels of daily foot traffic, so using a high-strength smoothing compound will help ensure long-term durability of the installation.

Fast-track smoothing compounds that are ‘walk-on’ hard in 30 minutes and ready to receive new floorcoverings from 45 minutes are also available, allowing installations to proceed faster than ever.

High-performance smoothing compounds that can be applied directly over bitumen and adhesive residues also offer significant



timesaving benefits for contractors undertaking refurbishment projects to a deadline. One such product, F. Ball’s Stopgap 1200, takes as little as 60 minutes to set and is ready to receive floorcoverings from as little as four hours. In most applications, including when it is applied over old adhesive residues, it is not essential to prime beforehand, saving further time.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT ADHESIVE

The contractor can then select a suitably fast-working adhesive to install appropriate floorcoverings. The choice of adhesive will often be determined foremost by what type of floorcoverings are being installed and where, but there are options for when timesaving is a priority.

Vinyl, which is easy to clean and maintain, is popular in educational facilities, and is best adhered by an adhesive with good initial tack and high final bond strength. Nowadays, acrylic and vinyl adhesives are available that build up a strong enough bond to allow for foot-traffic in less than an hour after the application of floorcoverings.

Carpet tiles are another popular choice for areas such as libraries or common rooms, not least for their ability to be removed and replaced if individual tiles become worn or damaged. For this reason, carpet tile tackifiers are available that, once applied, only take 30 minutes to form a permanently tacky film that prevents the tiles from moving laterally under everyday traffic, while allowing individual sections to be lifted and replaced with ease.

https://f-ball.com/en

HOT STEPPER

From warmer wood tones to statement parquet patterns, Luxury Flooring looks at two trends that are predicted to have lasting power.

Flooring tastes are warming up. After years of cool greys and understated planks dominating interiors, homeowners are increasingly looking towards warmer, more characterful floors. At the same time, herringbone and chevron patterns continue to bring classic parquet into contemporary homes.

On their own, warm tones and patterned floors can completely change the feel of a room. Put together, they create a look that feels inviting, considered and surprisingly versatile.

WARM TONES ARE BACK

Grey had its moment, but warmer shades are taking over. Natural oak remains an easy pick. Deeper brown and golden tones, however, add personality without overwhelming a room.

Colour matters a lot when it comes to choosing a floor. In Luxury Flooring's customer research, around 80% of shoppers who ordered samples cited colour as their reason for doing so. It shows how important seeing a shade in the home can be before making a final decision.

Warm tones also suit a wide range of interiors. A honey-toned floor pairs well with cream walls and natural fabrics for something relaxed. Deeper oak also sits nicely alongside dark cabinetry for a bolder, moodier scheme.

For customers after authentic grain and character, engineered wood flooring shows off the natural variation that makes warm tones so effective. LVT replicates the same shades in a sturdier material that's built for muddy paws, spilt drinks and the daily wear of family life.

PATTERN IS MAKING ITS MARK

Parquet flooring used to be reserved for grand period properties. Herringbone has changed that, giving homeowners an easy way to make the floor part of the room's design rather than just its backdrop.

Herringbone lays rectangular blocks in a staggered zig-zag. This creates the broken pattern associated with classic parquet. Chevron uses planks cut at an angle so the ends meet in a continuous V-shape. Both draw the eye across a room and lift even a simple interior.

Traditional parquet flooring still delivers the most heritage appeal. But engineered wood and LVT bring the same pattern within reach of more homes and budgets. LVT herringbone brings the look of timber into hardwearing spaces, whereas engineered wood parquet offers genuine character that copes better with humidity and temperature changes than solid wood.

WHEN WARM TONES MEET PATTERN

This is where the two trends really earn their keep. A warm oak herringbone floor adds interest without looking too formal, while a deeper brown chevron makes a much bolder statement.

The pairing also fits with the wider shift toward interiors that feel lived-in rather than overly polished: soft furnishings, timber furniture and a floor with enough movement to handle everyday life.

For retailers, it's a good way to talk to customers about the room as a whole, rather than colour, material and pattern as three separate decisions. Whether that's engineered wood, LVT or parquet, warm tones and pattern look set to give floors plenty more personality through 2026 and even into 2027.

Explore Luxury Flooring's range of engineered wood, LVT and parquet flooring. You can also order free samples to see how different colours and patterns look in your own space.

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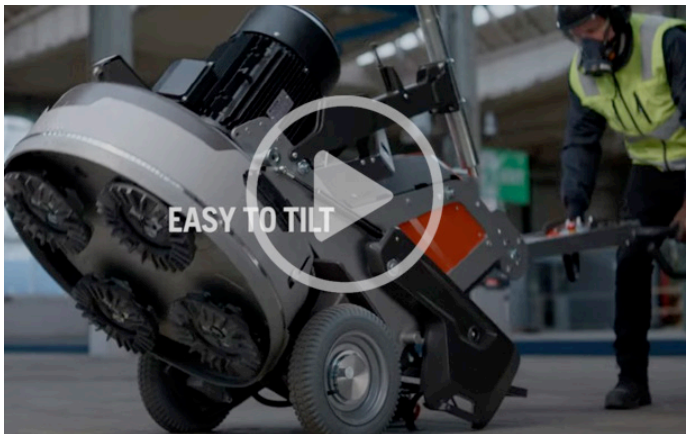


Scott Bentley, Business Development Manager at **MeasureSquare**, sits down to discuss more about the new MeasureSquare CRM launched earlier this year and how flooring businesses are benefiting from a one stop shop fully integrated solution by reducing data duplication from multiple software systems. Scott also discusses MeasureSquare's commitment to innovation and what users can expect in the coming months.

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UNDERLAY, UNDERLAY

Matthew Haestier of Direct Flooring Online looks at the best types of underlay for different rooms and applications, from stairs and hallways to underfloor heating.

When choosing underlay, it's important to consider which type is best suited to each area.

Felt Underlay is the most durable underlay available, offering excellent levels of cushioning, insulation and sound reduction. However, its robust construction may make it difficult to cut and fit on stairs.

Crumb Rubber Underlay is largely made from recycled rubber, making it a durable choice for areas with heavy furniture. Its resilience helps protect carpet from indentations and compression.

Sponge Rubber Underlay is well suited to concrete floors and underfloor heating, combining durable cushioning and heat transfer design.

Foam Underlay is a lightweight, flexible option that works particularly well in tricky areas such as stairs. It also provides good levels of sound reduction and insulation.

The best underlay for stairs may not be the best choice for an entrance hallway. Hallways typically experience heavier foot traffic and therefore require a more durable underlay.

For rooms with underfloor heating, you will need to ensure the combined tog rating of the carpet and underlay is less than 2.5, otherwise the heat will not transfer well through the flooring.

In living rooms, a soft, comfortable underlay can help create a more luxurious feel, but durability is also important as these areas tend to receive a high level of use.

Where sound reduction is a priority, foam or sponge rubber underlay can be a good choice. For uneven floorboards, a thick, robust option such as crumb rubber can help provide a more stable surface.

WHAT IS THE BEST THICKNESS FOR UNDERLAY?

When it comes to selecting underlay, the general rule is that thicker is better. However, there are several factors worth considering:

Price – The thicker the underlay, the more material is required, and the higher the cost will be.
Fitting – Thicker underlay can be heavier to handle and more difficult to cut and install.





Underfloor Heating – Thicker, highly insulating underlays can reduce heat transfer from underfloor heating systems to the floor surface. Some underlays are specifically designed for use with underfloor heating, while others are not suitable at all.

QA FloorSure Gold 10mm Carpet Underlay offers excellent thermal and sound insulation, keeping the whole room warmer and more comfortable.

DOES IT MATTER WHAT UNDERLAY YOU USE?

Yes, underlay is more important than many people realise and can affect comfort, insulation, flooring performance and installation.

Comfort – Hard subfloors can be very uncomfortable to walk on with thin underlay, and even more so without any at all.
Heat Retention – Thin or poor-quality underlay may provide less insulation, which can be particularly noticeable during the winter months. Good-quality underlay can help retain warmth, potentially reducing the amount of energy needed to heat the room.
Heat Transfer – Installing a highly insulated underlay over underfloor heating can restrict the amount of heat reaching the flooring surface. It is therefore important to choose an underlay suitable for use with the heating system.
Flooring Lifespan – Using an inadequate or unsuitable underlay can contribute to increased wear and reduce the performance and lifespan of the floorcovering. Depending on the product, using the wrong underlay may also affect warranty cover.
Installation – Installing the incorrect type of underlay for certain areas can make cutting and fitting during installation much more difficult. This is especially relevant for DIY projects.

WHICH UNDERLAY IS BEST FOR BEDROOMS?

A soft, comfortable underlay can be a good choice for bedrooms, where people are often barefoot or wearing socks. Felt underlay can be a suitable option, offering cushioning as well as insulation.

While thicker underlay generally provides a softer feel underfoot, the ideal thickness will vary depending on the carpet. A thinner carpet may benefit from a thicker underlay, while pairing a thick carpet with thick underlay could result in an excessively deep pile.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU CHANGE UNDERLAY?

It's a mistake to overlook the underlay when replacing flooring. If a floorcovering has reached the end of its useful life, the underlay underneath may also have deteriorated, even if this isn't immediately visible.

Using old underlay with a new floorcovering can affect its comfort, appearance and performance, making replacement alongside the flooring a worthwhile investment.

Underlay can last for up to 25 years providing the installation was done correctly.

https://directflooringonline.co.uk

A SOUND CHOICE

Forbo's Allura Decibel LVT is helping Broadland Housing Association create quieter, more comfortable homes, combining 19dB impact sound reduction with practical installation benefits.

As part of Broadland Housing Association's commitment to maintaining its housing stock, the association's Planned Works Team is undertaking an extensive programme of kitchen and bathroom refurbishments. To support these upgrades, Broadland has turned to Forbo Flooring Systems' Allura Decibel LVT collection – flooring that not only enhances a resident's home but also brings practical benefits to the site teams.

Formed in 1963, today Broadland Housing Association provides over 5,000 quality homes across Norfolk and north Suffolk, including family homes and modern apartments through to sheltered housing.

Tasked with maintaining and refurbishing the properties, ensuring tenants are provided with a safe, welcoming and high-quality home, is the Planned Works Team. Chris Boyd, Planned Works Manager at Broadland Housing Association, said: "I'm responsible for managing some of our kitchen and bathroom refurb programmes – we oversee a skilled team of bathroom and kitchen fitters, electricians, and occasionally flooring contractors who carry out the work on site.

"We're currently working on a number of homes across Norfolk and parts of Suffolk, retrofitting new kitchens and flooring. As an association, we use Forbo's range of flooring solutions across all properties – including both refurbishments and new builds. This comes on the back of recommendations from Tim Linghorn, National Housebuilder Manager at Forbo, with whom we have a strong working relationship."

With Broadland HA currently in the process of switching from sheet vinyl flooring solutions to luxury vinyl tiles (LVT), predominantly for health and safety reasons, Forbo's Allura collection has played a valuable supporting role. Chris explained: "As a result of the association's comprehensive housing portfolio, we work across a variety of properties, including large apartment blocks. In these settings, carrying large rolls of vinyl up and down stairs can present a significant health and safety risk for our teams, whereas LVT is far easier to handle thanks to its modular format.

"Another added benefit is that there is often reduced waste with LVT products, with any left-over planks able to be simply returned to our depot, ready for use on the next job. In comparison, vinyl installation offcuts would generally end up being sent to landfill or excess material lost under units."

Specifically, Forbo's Allura Decibel range has been specified across the latest refurbishments, with the floorcovering combining beautiful floor design and best-in-class impact sound reduction with excellent functionality, including enhanced indentation performance and a PUR wear layer to stand up to everyday scratches and scuffs. The 19dB sound reduction is achieved in the one product, as opposed to requiring a separate acoustic underlay. The tackified installation method makes it quick and easy to fit, as well as enabling individual planks and tiles to be uplifted and replaced in the case of damage.

Chris concluded: "There's so much to like when it comes to Allura Decibel. From an aesthetic point of view, it's a great looking floorcovering, as well as being easy to handle and install for our site teams. The acoustic performance is especially advantageous when you consider the residential application. Bathrooms and kitchens in particular are probably some of the busiest spaces within a home. With 19dB sound reduction, it prevents impact sound from travelling through the suspended floor to the property beneath, ensuring that we are creating peaceful and welcoming spaces for all our tenants."

www.forbo-flooring.co.uk/alluradecibel









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WARMTH & DEPTH

Havwoods introduces its Auburn colour group, a collection of warm brown wood flooring designed to bring depth, natural character and versatility to residential and commercial interiors.

Rich, warm and endlessly versatile, Havwoods' Auburn wood flooring brings a sense of depth and comfort into the home. Inspired by autumn leaves, caramel tones and glowing embers, the Auburn colour group offers a warm brown foundation that feels both inviting and refined.

Sitting between Havwoods' lighter Honey tones and deeper brunette shades, Auburn provides an elegant middle ground for interiors that need warmth without becoming too dark. Its natural brown tones make it a highly adaptable choice, working across everything from traditional family homes and period properties to contemporary apartments, restaurants, hotels and commercial spaces.

Auburn flooring has an enduring appeal because it brings a specific atmosphere to a room. Its richness helps anchor a space, while its natural timber character brings texture and variation underfoot. This makes it particularly suited to interiors where warmth, longevity and natural materials are key.

The Auburn colour group pairs beautifully with soft neutrals, natural stone, aged brass and earthy palettes. Whether used to add warmth to a minimal scheme or to enhance a more layered interior, Auburn flooring creates a strong and adaptable base from which to build on.

Designed for modern living, Havwoods' Auburn products combine the beauty of real wood with long-lasting performance. Available across a variety of engineered and solid wood flooring options, the collection includes classic planks, herringbone patterns, chevron formats and more decorative designs such as Versailles panels. Homeowners and designers can choose from cleaner surfaces that subtly highlight the natural grain to more characterful grades with greater texture and variation.

Havwoods' hero Auburn colour, Bronzo, captures the warmth and depth that defines the colour group. Part of the bestselling Italian Collection, Bronzo is available in a range of formats including classic plank, herringbone and chevron, offering flexibility across a wide variety of project styles and requirements.

With its balance of warmth, versatility and natural character, the Auburn colour group brings a sense of permanence to interiors. Whether used in a welcoming living space, an elegant dining room, a boutique hospitality setting or a contemporary open-plan scheme, Havwoods' Auburn flooring offers a rich and timeless surface solution designed to work beautifully for years to come.

With a vast array of wood surfaces to suit any interior, Havwoods' varied collection combines the very best in style and functionality, offering both contemporary and traditional designs in a range of colours and patterns. From virtual appointments to experts located in showrooms, the dedicated and knowledgeable team works closely with every customer to ensure every detail of their project is met.

www.havwoods.com/uk

REFURB READY

Jason Tatton , technical service manager at F. Ball and Co. Ltd., advises on preliminary work to achieve optimum results when installing floorcoverings as part of a refurbishment.

The first step in any flooring installation should be to check that subfloors are suitably sound, smooth and dry. When undertaking installations as part of a refurbishment, there will frequently be a number of challenges that you would be less likely to encounter in new-build settings, including contending with subfloors in a poor condition. You never know what you are dealing with until you actually remove old floorcoverings and examine the substrate. Just as when installing floorcoverings anywhere else, flooring contractors need to be aware of the problems posed by the common problem of damp, the leading cause of floor failure.

MOISTURE MANAGEMENT

Excess levels of subfloor moisture can result in moisture rising up and attacking adhesives and floorcoverings, possibly causing complete floor failure. Building regulations introduced in 1965 made it a requirement to install a structural damp-proof course in new buildings, so excess subfloor moisture as a result of rising damp is more likely to be a concern in buildings built before this time.

Even if a damp-proof course is present, contractors should always conduct a moisture test to determine subfloor moisture levels before proceeding to apply subfloor preparation products, not least because the damp-proof course may have been compromised at some point in the building's history. Where a moisture test indicates that subfloor relative humidity (RH) levels are above 75% (65% if wood floorcovering will be installed), a waterproof surface membrane will be required to suppress excess subfloor moisture levels.

Epoxy waterproof surface membranes are available that will isolate excess subfloor moisture caused by rising damp and residual construction moisture where relative humidity values are up to 98%, with a single coat application, and fully cure in as little as three hours.

DAMAGED SUBFLOORS

Upon removing old floorcoverings, contractors may discover that the subfloor is cracked or damaged. This needs to be addressed before proceeding to the next stages of subfloor preparation. The appearance of cracks should always be investigated to ensure stability and no further movement in case there is an underlying issue that may result in floor failure. Where subfloors are very badly damaged, mechanical repair of the subfloor may be necessary. In most cases, cracks as deep as 50mm can be filled with a repair compound. Some smoothing compounds can also be filled up to 50mm when graded aggregate is added.

It may also be the case that contractors find a sand/cement or calcium sulphate screed has a weak or friable surface – often the result of improper installation or curing techniques.

To avoid having to completely remove a weak or friable sand/cement screed by mechanical means, it may be possible to treat it using a surface reinforcement system, such as Stopgap SRS, a two-component epoxy resin reinforcement material designed to quickly stabilise and reinforce weak sand/cement. Contractors simply mix the components thoroughly, pour the mixture over the weak subfloor and spread out with a rubber squeegee, working into the surface until no more liquid is absorbed. Stopgap SRS is fast-acting, meaning weak screeds can be reinforced overnight to provide a base suitable for the installation of subsequent subfloor preparation products.

CONTAMINATION

Old adhesive residues, such as bitumen and carpet tile tackifiers, may also be present after removing old floorcoverings. Traditionally, contractors would have to remove these completely by mechanical means before proceeding. Recent innovations now offer an alternative time-saving solution: as long as adhesive residues are minimal and well bonded, contractors can apply a smoothing underlayment that has been specially formulated for use over old adhesive residues.

Such products were previously only available in bag and bottle formulations. The latest advancements in technology have enabled F. Ball to create a new fast-track, water-mix smoothing underlayment that can be applied over old adhesive residues, Stopgap 1500.

Subfloors may also be contaminated with oil, grease or other chemicals. In this case, the surface will need to be removed using mechanical means before applying other floor preparation products. In the case that the subfloor is very badly contaminated, the screed may need to be completely replaced.

NEXT STEPS

Once the subfloor is suitably sound, smooth and dry, contractors can proceed with the installation of new floorcoverings. Where an isolator membrane has not been used, this should include the application of a suitable smoothing compound to create a perfectly smooth base for the receipt of floorcoverings.

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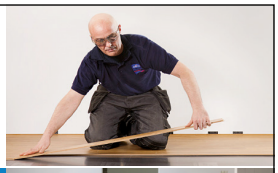
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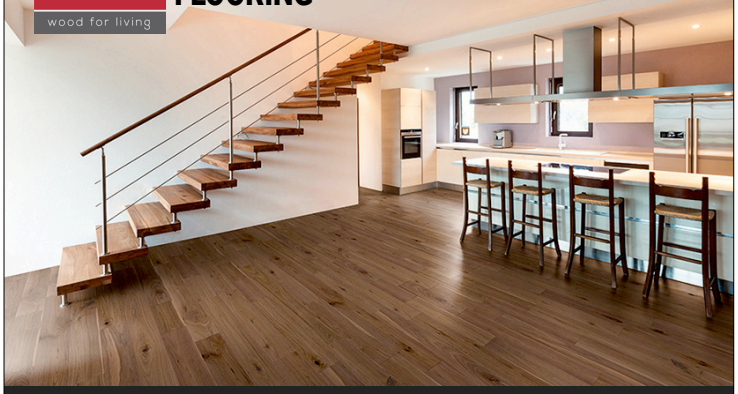
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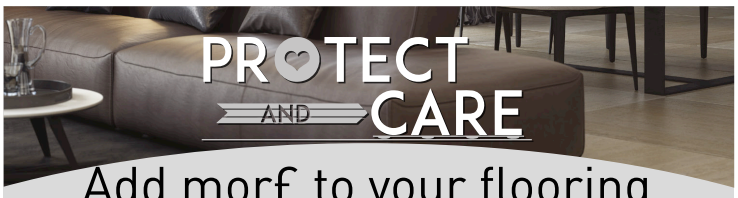


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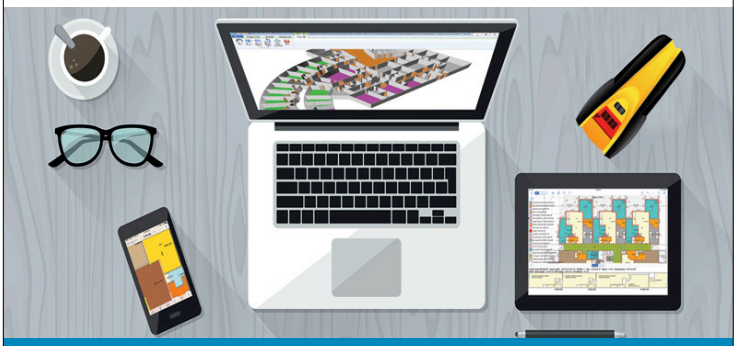
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