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Welcome to the Autumn 2026 issue of Tomorrow's Tile & Stone.

As the world of interiors continues to evolve, tiles remain at the heart of some of the most exciting design conversations – combining creativity, craftsmanship and technical performance in equal measure. From bold statement surfaces to subtle natural textures, this issue explores how tiles are helping to shape spaces that are not only beautiful, but built to last.

We begin with the small details making a big impact. In our Spotlight feature, DECOCER showcases how its small-format ceramic collections are bringing together traditional craftsmanship and geometric design to open up new possibilities for creative tile schemes.

Elsewhere, María D. Arráez from Tile of Spain UK looks ahead to the key influences shaping tile design in 2026, exploring how changing tastes are inspiring new approaches to colour, pattern and application.

Natural materials continue to be a major source of inspiration, and our Stone focus explores the latest developments in surfaces. Laura Vaillant at PWS examines how expressive veining, warmer tones and authentic finishes are redefining worktops, while Carly Allison at Fired Earth looks at the enduring appeal of natural stone tiles alongside the advances in porcelain that are delivering realistic stone effects with practical benefits.

We also take a look at the role performance plays in today's projects: from antimicrobial technologies that enhance ceramic surfaces to the specialist installation systems helping deliver exceptional results in demanding hotel and spa environments.

Finally, we turn our attention beneath the surface with Setcrete, exploring why thorough preparation is essential for achieving long-lasting tile installations.

Whether you're designing, specifying, installing or simply passionate about tiles and stone, we hope this issue provides inspiration, insight and practical knowledge to help you create outstanding spaces.

Happy reading!



Sarah Robinson, Editor



Find us on X @TomorrowsTS

CEO: Mark Hanson (mark@opusbm.co.uk)
 Production Director: Hannah Wilkinson (hannah@opusbm.co.uk)
 Advertising Executive: Alex Lawrence (alex@opusbm.co.uk)
 Editor: Sarah Robinson (sarah@opusbm.co.uk)
 Designer: Daniel Etheridge (daniel@opusbm.co.uk)
 Designer: Hao Nguyen (hao@opusbm.co.uk)

E: info@opusbusinessmedia.co.uk
 T: 01625 426054

www.tomorrowstileandstone.co.uk

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MAPEI UK MARKS CONTINUED EXPANSION WITH NEW DISTRIBUTION CENTRE

Mapei UK has acquired new warehousing and offices as part of its continued expansion. The new mega-hub, titled 02 Distribution Centre, is located at Titan 10, Bilston, near Wolverhampton and spans over 260,000 sq. feet. It will provide warehousing for Mapei's increasing product lines for construction projects from basement to roof, including installation solutions for ceramic, stone, resilient, textile and wood flooring, structural waterproofing, roofing, concrete repair, paints and coatings, industrial flooring, external wall

insulation, underground construction and more. Mapei's Midlands-located warehouses will continue to transfer to the 02 location during 2026 as part of Mapei's strategy to bring all logistics 'under one roof'.

A premium facility located just four miles from the M6, Titan 10 Bilston provides excellent connectivity for Mapei UK's regional and national distribution. The expected average Mapei tonnage that will be dispatched from the warehouse is 15,152 Tn/month.

Established in the UK in 1989, Mapei UK employs more than 450 people throughout the UK and Ireland. The firm cemented its commitment to the local market in 2004 with the completion of a brand-new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Halesowen, West Midlands. It now also has a concrete admixtures manufacturing plant in Speke, Liverpool and two further manufacturing facilities in Burnley, a Mapei Academy training facility in Halesowen and a Specification Centre in Clerkenwell, London.

Office space at the 02 Distribution Centre will house Mapei UK's Technical Services and Marketing Departments.

"The new Distribution Centre will enable us to further enhance our customer service, efficiency and capacity. Being close to our main Halesowen plant, and in such a connected central location, it also brings additional sustainability benefits, enabling us to optimise transport routes and implement new initiatives from a central site," explained Phil Breakspear, Mapei UK Managing Director.

www.mapei.co.uk



ENTRIES NOW OPEN FOR THE APE GRUPO ARCHITECTURE AWARDS

APE Grupo has launched the fourth edition of its Architecture Awards, an international competition recognising outstanding architecture and interior design projects incorporating the company's ceramic materials.

With submissions in previous editions from Europe, the Americas and Asia – including projects from the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Romania, the Philippines, Costa Rica, Belarus, Serbia, France and Spain – the awards showcase the wide variety of ways architects and interior designers around the world integrate ceramics into their work.

Architect Sol Madrdejos, co-founder of Sancho-Madrdejos and internationally recognised for a body of work exhibited at institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London and the Venice Architecture Biennale, will chair the jury for this fourth edition.

Joining her on the jury are Gerard Sanmartí, co-founder and Managing

Partner of Lagranja Design, whose studio has received prestigious international accolades including the Red Dot Awards, IDEA Awards and Architizer A+ Awards, and Susana Babiloni, President of the Castellón Association of Architects (CTAC).

The awards are open to architects, interior designers, designers, landscape architects, renovation professionals and multidisciplinary practices of any nationality. Eligible projects must have been completed and must make significant use of ceramic materials from one of APE Grupo's brands: APE, Carmen, XLINING or Ilbagno.

The winning project will receive a €5,000 prize, and entries may be submitted until 13 November. Eligible works include new-build projects, refurbishment and renovation schemes, individual spaces forming part of larger architectural developments, and temporary installations.

Full details of the competition and entry requirements are available on the website below.

www.apegrupo.com/architectureawards/en



ARDEX GROUP UK AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS BSI KITEMARK FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The ARDEX Group UK – manufacturer of high-performance flooring, tiling and general construction brands across the UK – has been awarded BSI Kitemark for Service Excellence, recognising the company's unwavering commitment to delivering outstanding customer experiences across its operations.

This respected certification, issued by the British Standards Institution (BSI), is a mark of quality and trust, demonstrating that an organisation consistently delivers a high standard of service and places customers at the heart of its business.

David Lyman, UK general manager at ARDEX Group UK said: "We are delighted to have achieved the BSI Kitemark for Service Excellence. This recognition reflects the dedication and passion of our teams, who work tirelessly to support our customers, respond to feedback and continually improve the service we provide. While we are proud of this achievement, we remain focused on raising the bar even further."

The BSI Kitemark for Service Excellence is based on a rigorous, independent assessment process aligned with three internationally recognised standards:

- BS 8477:2014 – Code of practice for customer service

- ISO 10002:2018 – Guidelines for complaints handling
- BS ISO 23592:2021 – Service Excellence principles

Achieving this certification highlights the ARDEX Group UK's dedication to best practice in customer service, complaint management and continuous improvement – further reinforcing its reputation as a trusted partner to customers across the flooring, tiling and construction sectors through its ARDEX, BAL and DUNLOP brands.

The BSI Kitemark has been recognised for over 120 years as a symbol of trust and confidence, independently verifying that products and services meet rigorous quality standards. The Service Excellence scheme builds on this legacy by helping organisations demonstrate

their ability to deliver exceptional customer experiences in a competitive marketplace, where service quality is a key driver of customer loyalty.

For ARDEX Group UK, this achievement reflects a company-wide commitment to listening to customers, investing in service innovation and embedding a culture that prioritises customer satisfaction at every touchpoint.

As the company celebrates this milestone, it also recognises the vital role played by its employees, customers and partners in helping to achieve this standard of excellence – and remains committed to continuously improving the customer experience in the years ahead.

<https://ardex.co.uk>
www.bal-adhesives.com



JOHNSON TILES BACKS LOW-CARBON TILE TECHNOLOGY FOR COMMERCIAL SCALE-UP

Johnson Tiles has announced a strategic partnership with materials technology company Dekiln to help commercialise an innovative low-carbon tile technology that could significantly reduce the environmental impact of construction fit-out and refurbishment projects.

The collaboration aims to scale up Dekiln's patented alternative tile concept, which is claimed to cut embodied carbon by up to 94% compared with conventional ceramic tiles while containing more than 95% recycled content.

Unlike traditional ceramic tiles, the new material combines plant-derived binders with waste mineral powders, including recycled gypsum plaster, to create a product with similar appearance, feel and performance characteristics. As the tiles do not require firing or glazing at high temperatures, the manufacturing process eliminates the need for energy-

intensive kilns, substantially reducing carbon emissions.

The technology attracted the support of intellectual property commercialisation specialist Frontier IP, which helped formalise the partnership between the two companies. Frontier IP Chief Executive Officer Neil Crabb said the agreement demonstrated growing confidence in Dekiln's innovation following founder Dr Aled Roberts' selection as a Green Future Fellow by the Royal Academy of Engineering.

The fellowship, awarded at the end of 2025, secured £3m in funding to help bring the kiln-free, low-energy ceramic-like composite material to market.

Dr Aled Roberts, founder and CEO of Dekiln, said: "Johnson Tiles' technical expertise, market reach and sustainability focus makes them an ideal partner to

support our ambition to scale up and commercialise our technology. This marks an important milestone for Dekiln as we transition from the laboratory to industrial scale manufacturing."

The companies are also exploring the possibility of establishing a pilot or demonstration manufacturing plant in Stoke-on-Trent, the historic heart of the UK's ceramics industry.

Jason Bridges, Procurement Director at Johnson Tiles, said the technology had the potential to be a "real game-changer", combining the performance and aesthetics of traditional ceramic tiles with dramatically lower embodied carbon, while supporting the company's long-term sustainability ambitions.

www.johnson-tiles.com

ARDEXACADEMY NORTH REOPENS FOLLOWING MAJOR REFURBISHMENT

The ARDEX Group UK has announced the official reopening of the ARDEXacademy North in Stoke-on-Trent.

The Academy has re-opened following a significant programme of renovation and investment. The upgraded facility has been transformed into a modern, highly flexible training environment designed to support education across the full range of building and construction sectors served by the ARDEX Group and its brands – BAL, ARDEX and DUNLOP.

Replacing the previous Innovation & Technology Centre (ITC), used predominantly for BAL-branded training, the new ARDEXacademy offers new purpose-built areas to provide a much broader and diverse, practical training space. The facility is now capable of supporting multiple construction disciplines, including tiling, flooring, screeding, waterproofing and general construction.

With immersive, hands-on and interactive learning at its core, the Academy has now fully reopened its doors to fixers, installers, contractors, architects, designers and distribution partners.

NEW AND ENHANCED FACILITIES

The upgraded ARDEXacademy North now includes:

- Brand-new moveable floor tiling and flooring bays.
- Larger practical wall bays for large-format tiling, waterproofing, and other preparation techniques.
- A fully refurbished auditorium, welcome room and reception.
- An upgraded Studio Room, featuring a large video wall and dedicated training area.

- Highly flexible spaces to support training across flooring, tiling, screeding, home improvement and general construction.
- Large flexible meeting rooms, which can be used for theoretical training and the delivery of CPDs.

Designed to adapt to a wide range of training requirements, the facility enables ARDEX Group UK to deliver tailored education for both practical and theoretical training requirements.

<https://ardexacademy.uk>



CRL STONE LAUNCHES NEW 2026 QUARTZ BROCHURE

CRL Stone has launched its new 2026 CRL Quartz brochure, presenting its complete collection of engineered quartz surfaces alongside clearly identified Low Silica and Silica Free options.

Designed as a comprehensive source of inspiration and technical information for kitchen retailers, fabricators, designers, architects and specifiers, the new brochure showcases the full CRL Quartz range in an easy-to-browse, image-led format.

Under the theme 'Modern Living. Made Easy.', the brochure highlights CRL Stone's extensive choice of quartz surfaces, with over 40 colours available across a wide variety of styles, from timeless whites and soft neutrals to dramatic marble-inspired designs, industrial greys, terrazzo effects and bold statement surfaces.

The brochure provides application guidance across kitchens, bathrooms, commercial spaces and walls, as well as information on backlighting quartz, care and maintenance, product features,

warranties and certifications. CRL Quartz surfaces are non-porous, easy to clean and designed to offer long-lasting durability, making them suitable for demanding residential and commercial environments.

Simon Boocock, Managing Director at CRL Stone, said: "The new 2026 CRL Quartz brochure has been designed to give our customers a complete and practical reference point for the full collection. As demand continues to grow for surfaces that combine

design impact, durability and practical performance, this brochure supports retailers, fabricators and specifiers with the inspiration and information they need to help customers choose the right surface for every project."

The collection is supported by a 25-year residential warranty and a 10-year commercial warranty, giving trade professionals and their customers additional peace of mind.

www.crlstone.co.uk



MAPELEVEL DELIVERS PRECISION TILE LEVELLING FOR PROFESSIONAL INSTALLERS

Achieving a flat, even surface is essential for ensuring both the performance and appearance of tiled finishes. Mapelevel provides a professional tile levelling solution designed to ensure consistent, level surfaces during tile installation. Ideal for large-format tiles where precision is crucial, Mapelevel aligns adjacent tiles while adhesive sets, helping to eliminate lippage and deliver consistent grout lines. The result is a fast and efficient installation with a superior finish.

The Mapelevel series includes four systems: Mapelevel Easy, Mapelevel Easyclick, Mapelevel Easy T and Mapelevel Prowdg. Each system can be used to install all types of floor and wall tiles and includes a spacer, in a variety of formats and thicknesses, and cap combination. Once adhesive has cured, caps are easy to remove with the tap of a mallet or boot, leaving spacer clips below the tile surface.

Mapelevel Easy System is a quick-thread screw levelling system that comprises an open-view reusable cap, screw spacers and an anti-scratch shield. Spacers sit between tiles and caps are manually screwed on top, levelling the surface. Meanwhile, Mapelevel Easyclick System includes an Easyclick cap, incorporating an anti-scratch shield and spacers which fit between tiles. Caps are positioned over the spacer by pushing the side tabs and then screwed into place.

Mapelevel Easy T is a reusable levelling system that includes a levelling element and adjustment tool. Metal levelling spacers are inserted between tiles, screwed into place and easily unscrewed. This system is ideal for tiles up to 17mm thick and for joint widths from 1.5 to 6mm. It can also be used for making adjustments and in conjunction with other Mapelevel systems.

The fourth system, Mapelevel Prowdg, is a reusable wedge levelling system used with pliers. It includes wedges, coloured spacers clips and pushing pliers. Spacers are inserted between tiles and the piler is then used to tighten the wedge in place above the tile.

www.mapei.co.uk



SETCRETE RAPID S1 TILE ADHESIVE DELIVERS SPEED AND LASTING PERFORMANCE

Setcrete Rapid S1 Tile Adhesive is the risk-free choice for high-quality tiling installations that need to be completed quickly, but also demand long-lasting, durable performance.

The adhesive has an open time of 25 minutes, a pot life of 45 minutes and is set and ready to grout from just three hours.

It combines excellent bond strength with inherent flexibility to combat moderate movement and vibration. This ensures a tiling installation will maintain its integrity during day-to-day use, and throughout its lifetime.

Setcrete Rapid S1 Tile Adhesive is suitable for installing both wall and floor tiles, including large-format tiles, and is formulated for internal and external applications. It is ideal for tiling wet rooms and power showers.

It creates an excellent bond with a wide range of tiles, including porcelain, ceramic and natural stone, and can be applied over absorbent and non-absorbent surfaces, including subfloors that are subject to limited movement and vibration. It is also suitable for use over underfloor heating systems and for bed depths up to 15mm.

Setcrete Rapid S1 Tile Adhesive conforms to British standard BS EN12004. It is available in white and grey and is supplied in 20kg lined paper sacks.

Setcrete Rapid S1 Tile Adhesive is complemented by Rapid Flex Tile Grout, suitable for joints up to 15mm wide and available in white and slate grey colours.

www.setcrete.co.uk



N&C LAUNCH NEW TILE COLLECTIONS CATALOGUE

From artisanal handcrafted-inspired wall tiles and rich marble effects to statement stone floor tiles and opulent décor tiles, the latest looks in interior design have been carefully curated in N&C Tiles and Bathrooms' latest Tile Collections catalogue.

The 350+ page catalogue showcases the latest on-trend wall and floor tiles, from sought-after designs to truly unique collections.

The catalogue is designed to spark creativity and elevate interior and exterior spaces, through a rich variety of styles, colours, textures and formats. From artistic design inspired by the brushstrokes of the Monet Collection to the rich heritage-inspired tones of the Promenade collection, the catalogue is filled with ideas to bring to life.

Thoughtfully assembled to combine exceptional design, quality, durability and versatility, as well as exclusivity on many ranges, customers will discover collections to suit all aesthetic tastes for every room type within the home, not just the traditional bathroom and kitchen. The catalogue also highlights matching wall and floor combinations, indoor-outdoor porcelain collections and coordinating décor tiles, making it easier for homeowners and designers to create cohesive schemes throughout the home.

From timeless classic checkerboard designs to earthy neutrals, rich greens, fluted textures to wellness-inspired large-format pieces, the collection explores all areas of interior interest.

The catalogue can be found online or a copy can be picked up at any of the 14

nationwide N&C Tiles and Bathroom showrooms around the country.

Browse the full Tile Collections catalogue and discover over 150 stunning tile ranges, the latest interior trends and expert design advice.

www.nctilesandbathrooms.com



NEW PLANEX HR MAXI EXTENDS MAPEI SMOOTHING RANGE

Mapei has introduced Planex HR Maxi to its range of self-levelling/smoothing compounds. Rapid-drying and moisture-resistant, the new mortar is designed to level new and existing substrates, both indoors and outdoors, eliminating thickness variations from 3 to 30mm. It can be used to prepare surfaces before installation of all types of flooring, including ceramic tiles, resilient and textile flooring.

Ideal for areas subject to static and dynamic loads – from industrial or retail spaces to healthcare environments – Planex HR Maxi benefits from a specially developed formulation with exceptional resistance to moisture; this makes it particularly suitable for external applications and substrates that are not fully dry or that contain elevated levels of residual moisture. The mortar also offers

high compressive and flexural strength and is resistant to shrinkage, cracking, indentation and abrasion. Additionally, it features a very low VOC formulation with EMICODE EC1 Plus certification, helping to ensure a safe application environment.

Once mixed with water, Planex HR Maxi forms a rapid-drying, free-flowing compound with excellent workability and strong adhesion to the substrate. It can be applied manually or by automatic pressure pump over distances exceeding 100 metres. Ceramic tiles can be installed after just three hours, while resilient and wood flooring can be laid after 24 hours. In light-duty applications, the mortar can also be left exposed in areas subject to light foot traffic.

www.mapei.co.uk



FLEXIBLE PERFORMANCE: SETCRETE STANDARD S1 TILE ADHESIVE

Setcrete Standard S1 Tile Adhesive is the sensible choice for high quality tiling installations that need to deliver long-lasting, durable performance, and where grouting can wait until the following day.

The adhesive combines excellent bond strength with inherent flexibility to combat moderate movement and vibration, ensuring that tiling installations will maintain their integrity during day-to-day use, and throughout their lifetime.

Setcrete Standard S1 Tile Adhesive is suitable for installing both wall and floor tiles, including large-format tiles, and is formulated for internal and external applications. It is ideal for tiling wet rooms and power showers.

It creates an excellent bond with a wide range of tiles, including porcelain, ceramic, natural stone and glass

mosaics, and can be applied over both absorbent and non-absorbent surfaces, including subfloors that are subject to limited movement and vibration. It is also suitable for use over underfloor heating systems and for bed depths up to 15mm.

The adhesive has an extended open time of 40 minutes, a pot life of four hours and is set and ready to grout from 16 hours.

Setcrete Standard S1 Tile Adhesive conforms to British standard BS EN12004. It is available in white and grey and is supplied in 20kg lined paper sacks.

Setcrete Standard S1 Tile Adhesive is complemented by Rapid Flex Tile Grout, suitable for joints up to 15mm wide and available in white and slate grey colours.

www.setcrete.co.uk.



WE ARE STONE NETWORKING INITIATIVE LAUNCHES TO UNITE THE NATURAL STONE SECTOR

A new networking initiative designed to bring together professionals from across the natural stone industry will launch in London on 9 September 2026.

We Are Stone is the brainchild of Becca Cranthorne, Director of Athena Stonecare, who created the informal networking group to encourage greater collaboration, connection and peer support across the sector.

Open to anyone working in the stone industry, the free-to-attend events aim to provide a welcoming space where attendees can share ideas, exchange experiences and build relationships without the pressure of formal business networking.

Becca Cranthorne said: "The stone sector is unique because the many different facets work in harmony and can't survive without each other. From quarries to fabricators, masons and suppliers, every part of the industry plays a vital role in bringing projects to life.

"At a time when many businesses are facing a challenging market, we wanted to create a space where people can connect with counterparts, partners and even competitors. There is lots of brilliant work being done across the sector to promote natural stone, but if we don't look after the people, what is the point?"

The organisers say the initiative has been developed to address the lack of opportunities for people across the industry to meet informally, with regular events planned to strengthen relationships and foster a supportive community.

The inaugural event will take place from 6pm to 9pm on 9 September 2026 at Bulthaup Mayfair, 37 Wigmore Street, London W1U 1PP. Drinks and refreshments will be provided, with no

presentations or speeches – simply an opportunity for like-minded professionals to meet, discuss industry challenges and reconnect with colleagues old and new.

The first event is free to attend. To register, follow [this link](#) to the online form or email events@athenastonecare.co.uk.

www.athenastonecare.co.uk/we-are-stone



BAL LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE WITH ENHANCED DIGITAL TOOLS

Full tiling solutions specialist BAL has launched its new brand website, www.bal-adhesives.com, delivering a streamlined, user-friendly experience designed to make it easier than ever to find products, access technical information and plan tiling projects.

The new website marks a significant evolution from the previous platform, moving away from a complex segmented user experience to provide a single, intuitive destination suitable for tilers, fixers, distributors and specifiers alike.

Built with a responsive and fluid design, the new website has been developed with mobile users in mind, reflecting how the majority of people access BAL's digital resources.

Enhanced navigation and improved functionality ensure visitors can quickly find the information and products they need, whether on site, in store or on the move.

Among the new features available on the website are:

- **Product Comparison Tool** – Compare technical data and key features of similar products side-by-side so you can choose the right product for your project.
- **Smart Product Search** – Find the products needed for your project using a simple wizard drop down to select the tile type, area and substrate to find suitable products for that installation.
- **Job List** – While browsing users can select the products and quantities required for a job (adding them to a basket) and then email the list to themselves as an easy reference to order. Select by product, size and colour.
- **Personalised Technical Document Creator** – Create a singular bespoke PDF document with the specific technical documents required for your project. Name the project and create a bespoke cover.

The website also incorporates a range of essential resources and support tools, including:

- **Stockist locator** – Find your nearest BAL stockist and contact them for stock information. Includes all online stockists.
- **Key sales and technical contacts** – Find your local BAL

Training and Technical Support Manager or Areas Sales Manager for project support, moisture testing and sales advice.

- **GivBax Rewards points information and national GivBax offers** – Get Cashback on BAL products through GivBax Rewards, see the points for all BAL products and log-in to your GivBax account through the site.
- **Product calculators** – Work out how much BAL product you need on your tiling project. Then add the correct quantity to your job list.
- **Sustainability information** – See how BAL are a sustainable manufacturer, with the goal of being Carbon Neutral (scope 1 and 2) by 2030.
- **Specification support** – Find your local Business Development Manager to assist with your major tiling project. Access NBS Source and add BAL BIM Objects to your design project.
- **Technical guidance and product documentation** – View BAL's Blog and technical documents to ensure you are tiling correctly in line with British Standards and Best Practice.

Alex Underwood, Head of Marketing at BAL, said: "The launch of our new website represents a major investment in improving the customer experience and providing easier access to the products, tools and technical support our customers need."

"We've focused on creating a faster, more intuitive platform that helps contractors, retailers, distributors and specifiers find the right solutions quickly and efficiently. The new features have been designed to add real value and make planning and delivering tiling projects simpler than ever."

The new BAL website has been created to support customers at every stage of the project journey, from product selection and specification through to installation and aftercare.

Customers are invited to explore the new digital experience and discover the enhanced features, resources and support available online.

www.bal-adhesives.com

You're installing value

Market-leading full tiling solutions, trusted by professionals to deliver quality, easy-to-use products for long-lasting results.

[Explore Products](#) [Discover Support](#)

BAL Flex One

An enhanced standard setting flexible tile adhesive. It provides superior strength and excellent non-slip properties. High grab and grip, thixotropic and fluid formulations. Clear smooth formulations – use in thin.

bal-adhesives.com

BAL

JACKOBOARD FROM BEWI ADDS STUNNING FINISHING TOUCH TO BARN CONVERSION

BEWI's Jackoboard insulated construction board has featured strongly on a barn conversion near Stafford, making possible an impressive vaulted feature ceiling.

Jackoboard construction boards are manufactured from an extruded polystyrene foam (XPS) core with a special coating on both sides, and they form an ideal base for tiling, especially in bathrooms and wetrooms, since they are also waterproof, thermally insulating, lightweight and very strong.

The latest project, Brancote Farm, features two ensuites, two main bathrooms and two cloakrooms, where Jackoboard Plano was used in both 6mm and 12mm versions. Jackoboard Aqua Flat Wetroom Shower Trays were also used. Aqua Flat is a range of low profile wetroom shower bases specifically designed to create level entry showers in properties with suspended timber floors.

However, the stand-out feature in the new property is the curved ceiling, which features Jackoboard Flexo, giving all the benefits of all Jackoboard products but with the added ability to include curves suitable for installing on a vaulted ceiling.

Jackoboard Flexo is a bendable and adaptable construction board. Featuring slits on one side, Jackoboard Flexo is easy to bend, making it ideal for creating curved shapes. Its XPS foam core is water-repellent, and the special coating on both sides provides a base for the application of tiles, render or plaster. Jackoboard Flexo is the perfect construction board for forming curved contours in rooms with high humidity, due to its excellent thermal properties.

As at Brancote Farm, it can also be used as a flexible thermal insulation board. On this project it was subsequently plastered and painted. Simon Delves, BEWI's Business Development Manager, said: "This is quite a pioneering application for the product in the UK, but it has performed very well, providing a great aesthetic finish, while also enhancing the thermal properties of the building, due to its superior insulation properties."

The project was carried out by Meta Contracting, based in Wolverhampton. They had the vision to convert the building, which was originally a cow shed, into a luxury barn conversion, and they are also working on similar conversions to other brick barns and Dutch barns on the same farm. This is expected to be a three-year project in total.

A spokesperson from Meta Contracting said: "Jackoboard Plano provides a proven solution for fixing large-format tiles, such as we had on this project. However, it was interesting for us to work with Jackoboard Flexo for the curved roof, as we had not worked with this product before. As it turned out, it was straightforward to work with and enabled a very pleasing result, which looks great and which will also help temperature regulation in the building and reduce heating costs."

The Jackoboard products, complete with installation kits and accessories, as well as the large-format tiles, were supplied by Emerys Builders Merchants of Telford.

<https://bewi.com>



COMPLETE CARE

Casdron, the Sole Agents in the UK for the Lithofin brand, shares how the Stone Care System helps protect natural stone installations through effective cleaning, sealing and ongoing maintenance.

Natural stone continues to be one of the most sought-after surface finishes, valued for its individuality, durability and timeless appeal. Whether specifying limestone, slate, marble or granite, installers and retailers know that the quality of the finished installation depends on more than simply selecting the right stone. Long-term performance relies on using the correct products before, during and after installation.

For more than 70 years, Lithofin has developed specialist solutions designed specifically for natural and engineered stone. Rather than offering standalone products, the range is built around the proven Stone Care System – a straightforward process of Cleaning, Protecting and Maintaining that helps preserve both the appearance and longevity of stone surfaces.

The first stage is Cleaning. Cleaning the stone prior to grouting removes general dirt, adhesive residues, and dusting from the surface of the stone, to avoid these contaminants binding into the face during the sealing process. A second clean is recommended after the grouting process, since even the highest quality natural and engineered stone installation can be let down by residual grout film, further site dirt and installation debris.

Lithofin MN Power-Clean has been developed specifically for professional level cleaning; removing grease, ingrained dirt and residues quickly and effectively without compromising the stone itself. The result is a clean surface that's perfectly prepared for the protective treatment, both prior to and after grouting.

LITHOFIN MN POWER-CLEAN Intensive Cleaner

- Ideal for initial cleaning of newly installed natural stone.
- Removes grease, site dirt and installation residues.
- Suitable for interior and exterior applications.
- Coverage: up to 30m² per litre (diluted).

Most natural stone is porous to some degree. This makes it susceptible to staining from moisture colour and pigment from coloured grouts, as well as oils, grease, food and everyday spillages ongoing. This is why the Protection phase is so crucial to the Stone Care System. While many customers appreciate the beauty of natural stone, they are often unaware that protecting it should form part of every installation.

Applying a high-quality impregnator such as Lithofin MN Stain-Stop to the stone prior to grouting, and again once the surface has undergone a second clean and the grout is full dry, helps reduce staining and also simplifies and aids ongoing maintenance, as well as demonstrating professional best practice.

LITHOFIN MN STAIN-STOP Premium Impregnating Sealer

- Invisible protection against water and oil-based staining.
- Suitable for walls, floors, worktops and bathrooms.
- Interior and exterior use.
- If correctly maintained, protection can last up to five years.

*Depending on substrate and exposure

Protection, however, is only effective if it's maintained correctly. One of the most common mistakes is using everyday household cleaners that can gradually reduce the effectiveness of impregnating treatments or leave residues that detract from the natural beauty of the stone.

Using a specialist maintenance cleaner formulated specifically for natural stone helps preserve both the finish and the protective treatment. This gives installers confidence that the installation will continue to perform as intended, while retailers can offer customers an easy, ongoing maintenance solution that encourages repeat business.

LITHOFIN MN WASH & CLEAN Routine Stone Cleaner

- Concentrated cleaner for regular maintenance.
- Leaves no waxy build-up.
- Enhances the natural appearance with continued use.
- Typical dilution: 20ml per 10 litres of water.



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SMALL WONDER

DECOCER explains how its premium small-format ceramic collections are reimagining traditional craftsmanship and geometry to give architects and designers greater creative freedom.

In architecture and interior design, surfaces have long since ceased to be merely functional. They define atmosphere, influence the perception of space and increasingly contribute to the identity of a project. Against this backdrop, small-format ceramics are enjoying a renewed appreciation. Once associated primarily with traditional applications, they are now being rediscovered for their ability to introduce texture, rhythm and individuality into contemporary interiors.

For more than 35 years, DECOCER has been dedicated exclusively to the design and manufacture of premium small-format ceramic tiles. Combining artisanal know-how with advanced production technologies, the Spanish company has built its reputation on creating bespoke ceramic solutions that offer architects and interior designers exceptional freedom in colour, geometry, texture and composition. Today, with around 75% of its turnover generated in international markets, DECOCER has established itself as one of Europe's leading specialists in premium small-format ceramics.

Rather than treating ceramics simply as a surface finish, DECOCER approaches them as an architectural language capable of shaping the character of a space. This philosophy is reflected in two of its latest collections, TALYA and LYTHOS. Although inspired by different traditions, both

reinterpret familiar references through a contemporary lens, demonstrating how heritage can become a catalyst for innovation rather than an exercise in nostalgia.

TALYA: REDISCOVERING THE BEAUTY OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

Inspired by the rich heritage of zellige, TALYA celebrates the expressive qualities that have always distinguished handcrafted ceramics. Instead of striving for absolute uniformity, the collection embraces subtle variations in glaze, texture and reflection, allowing every installation to possess its own distinctive character.

Light plays a central role in the collection. The depth of its glossy glazes creates ever-changing reflections that evolve throughout the day, giving surfaces movement and visual richness without relying on decorative excess. The result is a material that feels both timeless and contemporary, capable of bringing warmth and authenticity to a wide range of interiors.

Available in 5 × 15cm and 10 × 10cm formats, TALYA also highlights the remarkable versatility of small-format ceramics. Different laying patterns, formats and colour



combinations enable designers to create compositions that range from understated and refined to bold and expressive.

Its palette of 10 carefully curated shades – from luminous whites and warm earth tones to delicate greens and deep aquatic blues – reinforces this sense of material richness. Rather than reproducing traditional ceramics, TALYA reinterprets their tactile qualities through a contemporary architectural vocabulary suited to residential, hospitality and commercial schemes alike.

LYTHOS: A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF GEOMETRY

While TALYA is driven by light and craftsmanship, LYTHOS explores another enduring architectural principle: geometry.

The collection draws inspiration from the historic stone pavements found across Mediterranean architecture, where repeated geometric patterns have defined courtyards, galleries and civic spaces for centuries. Instead of recreating these historic floors, DECOCER distils their compositional logic into a flexible ceramic system designed for contemporary architecture.

Built around four simple geometries – octagon, star, cross and insert – LYTHOS allows architects and designers to generate an extensive variety of layouts from a limited number of elements. The system encourages creativity while maintaining visual coherence, making it possible to create anything from restrained, elegant floors to highly graphic compositions with a strong architectural presence.

A restrained palette of White, Sand, Grey and Dark Grey allows the geometry itself to take centre stage. Combined with a

mineral matt finish and C3 slip resistance, the collection is suitable for both interior and exterior applications, extending its versatility across residential, hospitality and commercial projects.

TRADITION REIMAGINED

Although TALYA and LYTHOS differ in appearance, they are united by a shared philosophy. One draws inspiration from the handcrafted richness of glazed ceramics; the other from the compositional intelligence of classical stone paving. Together, they demonstrate that historical references need not be replicated literally to remain relevant. Instead, they can be reinterpreted as contemporary design tools capable of responding to today's architectural requirements.

More significantly, both collections reflect a broader shift in the role of ceramics within contemporary architecture. Surfaces are no longer conceived simply as finishes but as integral elements of spatial design, capable of influencing light, rhythm, texture and atmosphere. Whether through the luminous depth of TALYA or the modular precision of LYTHOS, ceramics become an active part of the architectural narrative.

As architects and interior designers continue to seek materials that combine technical performance with creative flexibility, small-format ceramics are assuming an increasingly prominent role. Through collections such as TALYA and LYTHOS, DECOCER demonstrates that innovation often begins with a fresh understanding of tradition, transforming familiar references into new possibilities for contemporary architecture.

www.decocer.com



STYLE WITH TILES

María D Arráez, Director of Tile of Spain UK, shares the new rules shaping how homeowners and designers are decorating with tiles in 2026.

Tiles are no longer confined to kitchen splashbacks and bathroom walls. As homeowners become more confident in their decorating choices, tiles are increasingly being used to introduce colour, texture and personality throughout the home. From statement headboards and decorative bathroom details to tiled furniture and creative laying patterns, today's interiors are embracing a more imaginative approach to surfaces.

RULE 1: LOOK AT INTERESTING LAYOUTS

When choosing tiles, it's easy to focus on the colour or finish, but the way they're laid can completely change the final look. A simple tile can feel modern when stacked vertically, classic when in a herringbone pattern, or playful when arranged in a checkerboard design. If you're renovating, it's worth exploring different layouts as they can make a space feel more bespoke without changing the tile itself.



RULE 2: THINK BEYOND KITCHENS & BATHROOMS

Tiles don't have to be limited to kitchens and bathrooms. If you're looking to add interest to a room, consider using tiles in unexpected places, such as behind a bed to create a headboard effect or on a feature wall in a living space. It's a great way to introduce colour, texture and personality without relying solely on paint or wallpaper. Tiles can instantly create a focal point and help give a room its own identity.



RULE 3: INTRODUCE TEXTURE

Texture is one of the easiest ways to make a room feel more interesting. Fluted, handcrafted and relief tiles add depth and catch the light in different ways throughout the day. If you prefer a more neutral colour palette, textured tiles are a great option because they add detail without needing bold colours or patterns."



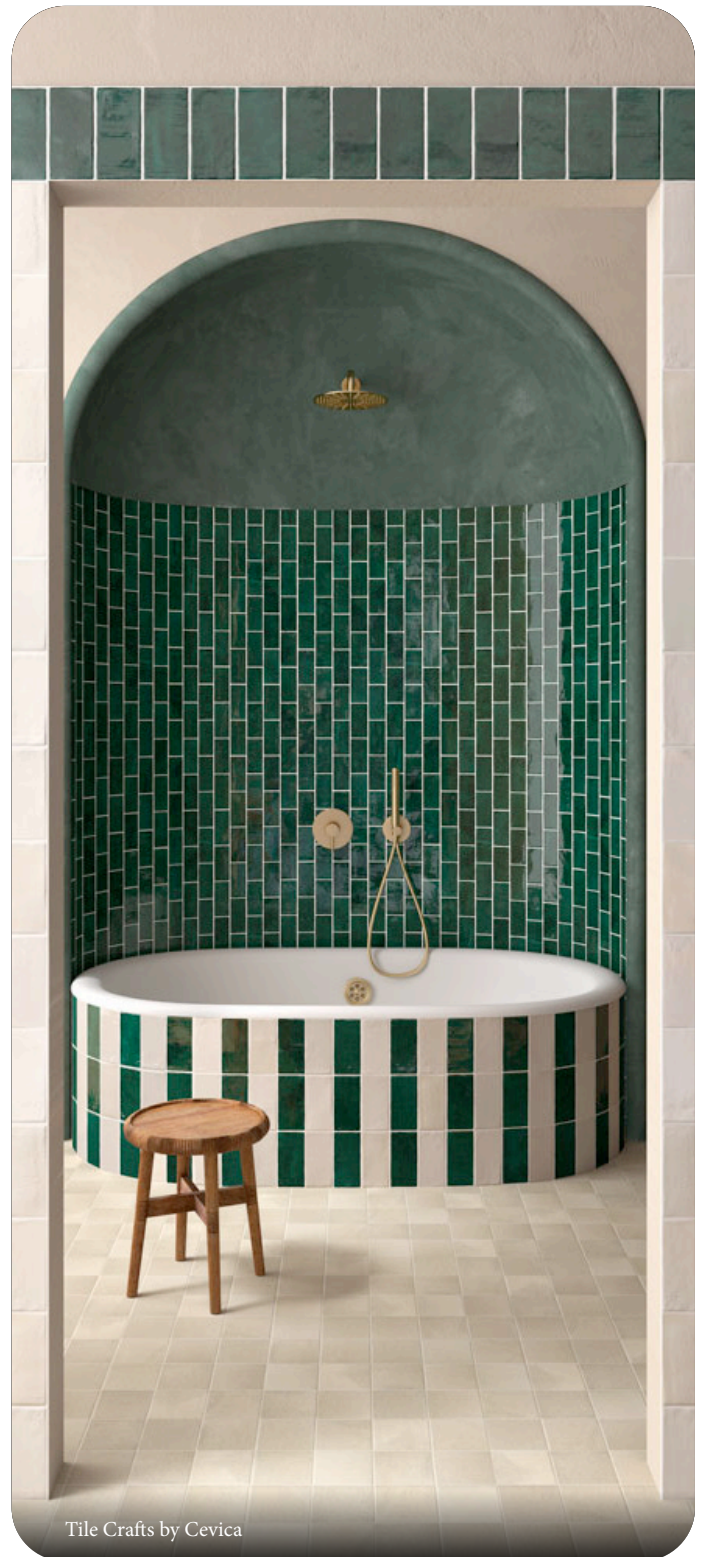
Alameda Blush & Dalia by Adex

RULE 4: HIGHLIGHT KEY FEATURES

You don't always need to tile an entire wall to make an impact. Sometimes the most effective designs use tiles to draw attention to a particular area, such as a shower, vanity unit, feature wall, architectural feature or alcove. Decorative borders, stripes and framed sections also help create a more considered look while allowing you to have fun with colour and pattern.



Krono Haya & Kenzo by Pamesa



Tile Crafts by Cevica

RULE 5: MIX FINISHES & FORMATS

As you would be adventurous with colours and patterns, don't be afraid to combine different finishes within the same room using tiles. Pairing matt and gloss tiles, or mixing smooth and textured surfaces, creates a space that feels more individual and less 'off the shelf'. The key is to keep the colours connected so the room still feels cohesive. To take it one step further, combine different format sizes to add depth and variety to a bathroom – from large-format floor options to small kitkat tiles for walls.

www.tileofspain.com

SURFACE STATEMENTS

As worktops become a defining feature of kitchen design, Laura Vaillant, Product Development Manager at PWS, examines the latest trends driving demand for bold aesthetics, authentic materials and everyday durability.

The worktop industry is experiencing a significant evolution as homeowners seek spaces that combine visual impact with everyday practicality. No longer viewed simply as a functional element in a kitchen, worktops have become a defining design feature within modern homes, reflecting broader trends and preferences towards authenticity, tactility, craftsmanship and personal expression.

EXPRESSIVE VEINING

One of the most notable developments is the growing popularity of expressive veining. While subtle stone-inspired patterns have long been a staple of kitchen design, consumers are increasingly embracing bolder, more architectural surfaces. Dramatic veining, inspired by natural marble and stone, is transforming worktops into focal points that anchor the entire room.

Rather than uniform or repetitive patterns, today's designs feature larger-scale vein structures with greater movement and fluidity. These surfaces create a sense of depth and individuality, helping kitchens feel more curated and luxurious. Alongside this, demand is growing for bookmatched installations and continuous-flow designs, where patterns are carefully aligned across surfaces to create a seamless visual effect. This approach reinforces the trend towards high-end, bespoke interiors and elevates the role of the worktop within the overall scheme.

FROM COOL SHADES TO EARTHY TONES

Colour preferences are also shifting. After years of cool greys dominating kitchen design, warmer neutrals are becoming increasingly influential. Shades such as taupe, clay, sand and soft bronze are gaining popularity as consumers seek spaces that feel welcoming, grounded and timeless.

This move reflects wider interior design trends centred on comfort-led spaces, wellbeing and biophilic influences. Natural, earthy tones help create a connection with the outdoors while providing a softer, more versatile backdrop for contemporary living. These warmer palettes pair particularly well with timber cabinetry, textured finishes and natural materials, creating balanced environments that feel both sophisticated and inviting.

FULL-BODIED MATERIALS

Another key trend shaping the category is the growing demand for material authenticity. As consumers become more informed about the products they specify, there is increasing appreciation for full-bodied materials that offer visual consistency throughout the slab.

Full-body construction, where colour and pattern run through the material rather than being limited to the surface, enhances realism and delivers a more authentic appearance. It also



allows fabricated edges, cut-outs and detailing to maintain the same visual characteristics as the face of the worktop. Advances in ceramic and engineered stone manufacturing continue to narrow the gap between natural and man-made materials, enabling designers and homeowners to achieve the look of natural stone with enhanced consistency and performance.

CERAMICS & SINTERED STONE

At the same time, ceramic and sintered stone surfaces are moving rapidly from niche specification to mainstream choice. Their rise has been driven by a combination of technical performance and increasingly sophisticated aesthetics.

Consumers continue to value practical benefits such as heat, stain and scratch resistance, particularly in busy family kitchens where durability is essential. However, it is the advances in manufacturing and print technology that are broadening their appeal. High-definition surface designs now replicate the intricate detail of natural marble, stone, concrete and metallic finishes with remarkable accuracy.

As innovation continues to accelerate, the future of the worktop market will be defined by the successful balance of performance, authenticity and design. Statement veining, warmer colour palettes, full-bodied construction and advanced ceramic surfaces all point towards a category that is becoming more expressive, more refined and increasingly central to the overall kitchen design story.

www.pws.co.uk/section/worksurfaces

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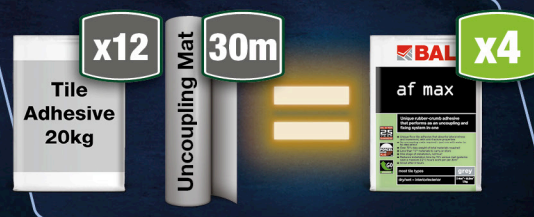


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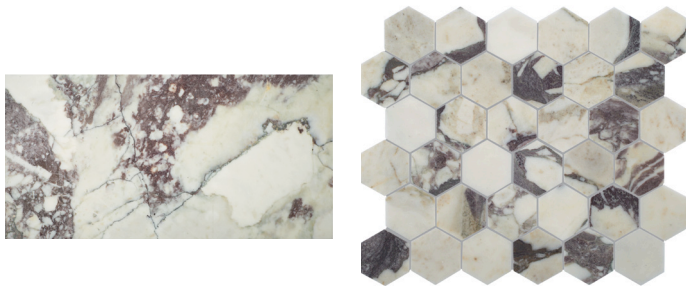
STONE AGE

Carly Allison, Head of Brand and Product at Fired Earth, discusses the latest trends in stone tiles

Over the past few years, interiors have moved away from highly polished surfaces and more towards materials such as limestone that feel more tactile, authentic and connected to nature. Consumers are creating spaces that provide a sense of calm with natural textures, earthy tones and imperfect finishes taking priority over high-gloss glamour. For tiles, this has translated into a growing demand for stone-inspired surfaces that celebrate variation, depth and character. Aged textures and matt finishes are becoming increasingly popular, creating interiors that feel layered and lived-in rather than a pursuit of perfection.

THE TIMELESS APPEAL OF MARBLE

Natural marble is perennially popular, and this trend will continue in coming months and years, but we are also seeing a surge in demand for marble with stronger colours and veining. One example is a latest addition to our collections, Calacatta Viola, which features deep purple, burgundy, green, and grey veining. These colourful threads vary from tile to tile meaning no two are exactly the same, which architects and interiors designers are prioritising currently as it gives them a point of difference. Quarried in Italy, Calacatta Viola has been used for centuries and is a striking choice for a range of interiors, and having a range of colours means that they're versatile and easy to decorate with. We've created rectangle and hexagon mosaic formats, making them an excellent choice for statement kitchen and bathroom splashbacks, feature walls, and floors.



Precise installation and aftercare techniques are important considerations required to achieve a long-lasting finish and so it is important to work with experts in natural stone and marble tiles when specifying them. Drawing on decades of experience, we provide professional guidance at every stage, from preparing and fixing tiles correctly to selecting the most suitable cleaning, sealing and protection products for each stone type. Our carefully developed installation recommendations help preserve the natural beauty, character and performance of marble and stone surfaces, ensuring they remain intact for their lifetime.

THE STONE EFFECT OF PORCELAIN

Another market trend we are witnessing is the growth of porcelain tiles with a stone effect. The manufacturing

technology has advanced significantly in recent years, meaning the finish is fantastic – it's very hard to tell them apart from original stone. The key benefits of stone effect porcelain are that they have a lower price point, are highly durable and easy to source, install and of course maintain.

One of our newest stone-effect tile collections is a great example of how to capture this desire within the market for natural texture in porcelain: Frame has the look and feel of authentic stone with the practical benefits of porcelain.

Frame brings together the soft variation of limestone with texture and subtle fossil detail, paired with a series of simple, considered formats. The tiles have a Nordic-inspired palette which is very popular and the collection is designed to create spaces that feel balanced, understated and quietly refined. Customers are also looking for versatility, so the collection is available in varying shapes such as a larger 30 x 30cm tile, a rectangular 5 x 30cm tile and a smaller 5 x 5cm square, so you have the option to lay the tiles in a single format or as a more architectural composition. They are fantastic indoors and outdoors, meaning you can create a cohesive look easily. The three neutral colourways; Chalk, Dune and Moor, offer simplicity and the freedom to play with pattern and proportion.



Frame stone-effect porcelain



Frame stone-effect porcelain



Calacatta Viola natural marble

INDUSTRY INNOVATIONS

One of the biggest developments in recent years has been the evolution of digital manufacturing, which has transformed the quality of stone-effect porcelain. Advances in high-definition digital printing means manufacturers can now recreate the intricate veining, tonal variation and tactile textures of natural stone with amazing accuracy. Some of our collections like Frame incorporate details such as fossils, reflecting the character that makes natural stone appealing in the first place.

Larger format tiles are continuing to grow in popularity as their scale helps to create more seamless, expansive surfaces with fewer grout lines. Improved production techniques mean greater variation between individual tiles, avoiding the repetitive appearance that was once associated with porcelain, for a more authentic appearance.

TECHNICAL & INSTALLATION ADVICE

NATURAL STONE

Marble has remained a favourite for years and years, but its enduring appeal lies in the fact that no two pieces are ever the same. Its natural variation and veining give every space a unique quality that can't be replicated. Those same characteristics, however, mean it requires a considered approach from the outset.

As a naturally porous material, marble needs careful handling during installation, from allowing the stone to dry fully before fixing to selecting adhesives and grouts that are compatible with both the substrate and the stone itself. Once installed, sealing plays an important role in protecting the surface from moisture, staining and everyday wear, while regular maintenance with pH-neutral cleaning products will help preserve its finish over time.

Understanding the characteristics of natural stone is just as important as choosing the right design. With the correct installation and ongoing care, marble will continue to develop character while retaining the timeless quality that has made it one of the world's most enduring interior materials.

STONE-EFFECT PORCELAIN

Stone-effect porcelain has become one of the fastest-growing categories within tile design, reflecting a wider demand for materials that combine authentic design with practicality. Thanks to advances in manufacturing, today's porcelain captures much of the depth, texture and tonal variation associated with natural stone, while offering greater resistance to staining, scratching and moisture.

Although porcelain is generally lower maintenance than natural stone, achieving the best finish still relies on good installation practices. Careful planning, the correct adhesive system and thorough cleaning after grouting all contribute to the overall appearance, particularly when working with large-format tiles where alignment and consistency are key.

As homeowners increasingly look for materials that deliver both longevity and ease of maintenance, stone-effect porcelain continues to offer an attractive alternative for kitchens, bathrooms and living spaces without compromising on design.

www.firedearth.com



Calacatta Viola marble

MAPEI LAUNCHES ULTRACARE 5 SIDES SEALER – THE PRE-FIX PROTECTOR FOR STONE

Ideal for summer landscaping projects, Mapei's pre-fix tile protector – UltraCare 5 Sides Sealer – is formulated to protect surfaces from moisture and adhesive staining. Designed for application to tile edges and the reverse of the tile, the treatment can be used on all types of natural stone installed internally and externally, including marble, granite, limestone, slate and travertine.

Featuring a water-based, natural-look formulation, UltraCare 5 Sides Sealer is applied to the rear of clean tiles before fixing with cement-based adhesive or thick bed mortar. The impregnator protects the treated surfaces from water and stains, and prevents efflorescence from rising from the substrate. It also protects tiles from contamination and staining from rising salts, tannins and oxides which can originate from underneath or from within the tile, rising through to the surface and staining. Without protection, these stains can only be treated if they occur from the surface; this makes the treatment especially suitable for application in wet and moisture-prone environments. Following application, moisture vapour is able to rise through the tile and the sealer does not affect bonding to the substrate.

After installation and removal of fixing residues, tile surfaces can then be sealed with UltraCare Stain Protector W and UltraCare Stain Protector W Plus natural-effect sealers or choose UltraCare Intensifier W or UltraCare Intensifier S for a colour-enhanced look.

Other new UltraCare treatments include UltraCare Rain Protector W, from the Zero Line, and UltraCare Rain Protector S, which both provide temporary protection for exterior flooring in contact with rainwater, at high and very

high contact angles, and stop water ingress when tile or stone surfaces are cracked.

For more information, please contact: info@mapei.co.uk or visit the website below.

www.mapei.co.uk



KERAKOLL H40: THE TRUSTED CHOICE OF ADHESIVE FOR NATURAL STONE

The H40 range uses Gel-Technology to give outstanding performance and make the adhesives very easy and pleasant to work with. They are soft and easy to trowel but still support heavy stone tiles without slumping and stop vertical slip when used on walls.

The mix flows easily across the entire back of the tile, fully wetting the surface, filling voids, and creating a complete structural bond. It does not dry out and thicken in the bucket, or form a film once spread. All of this is of paramount importance when working with heavy, difficult-to-maneuvre tiles such as large marble slabs.

All of the H40 Gel-Adhesives are classified either S1 or S2 for use on deformable substrates. The unbroken structural bond which they form with both the substrate and tile absorbs and evens out the stresses caused by substrate movement, meaning no

future problems with cracks and call-backs.

The range is available in four versions – H40 Gel – a standard-setting powder form, H40 Advanced – a rapid setting powder form, H40 Ultimate – a rapid-setting powder form with genuine S2 deformability, and H40 Extreme – a hybrid resin.

You can choose any of the adhesives with confidence, as all of them are suitable for use with natural stone on multiple substrates, but H40 Extreme is particularly good for sensitive stones and challenging substrates.

Talk to your local Sales Representative or use the contact details below for more information on using these innovative products with natural stone.

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 - XFLO
 - ULTRApate li
 - RUBBERfon® Impact 3 (For acoustic floors)
2. Collecta - CLICKFLO® UFH system
3. Bostik - SL C530 FLEX
4. Bostik - GRIP A526 UNIVERSAL
5. Bostik - FLEXIBLE TANKING SYSTEM
6. Bostik range of tile adhesives & grouts

Info:

Bostik and Collecta high-performance solutions combine to create a tested heated floor system for wet rooms and bathroom floors. Designed for outstanding response times, high heat outputs and effective moisture protection, the low-profile system accommodates either 12mm and 16mm underfloor heating pipes, providing installation flexibility without compromising performance. The complete system is designed to include a fall to direct water efficiently towards the wet room drainage outlet.

SCAN HERE

LEISURE EXCELLENCE

From swimming pools to wellness spaces, Mapei's integrated installation system has delivered a high-performance finish throughout The Club at The Belfry Hotel & Resort.

A comprehensive Mapei system has been used to complete a ceramic installation at The Club – the newly opened leisure and fitness centre at The Belfry Hotel & Resort in Warwickshire. The project included concrete repair, waterproofing, the installation of over 1000m² of tiles by JP Tiling Contractors and a full swimming pool solution by Neuman Aqua. The project was delivered by main contractor, Elliott Group.

Opened in September, The Club is home to an extensive gym overlooking the resort's championship PGA National golf course, as well as a multi-purpose sports hall, four spacious studios and a 25-metre lap pool, amongst much else. It forms the centrepiece of a wider £90m development project at The Belfry Hotel & Resort, which also includes a state-of-the-art events space and 149 new bedrooms.

The leisure installation areas spanned the 25-metre lap pool, a separate family pool and channel – incorporating careful interfacing with play features and a water slide installation, an indoor bubble pool, balance tanks and an outdoor bubble pool. Meanwhile, areas completed by JP Tiling included the sauna and steam rooms, changing areas and Revive Café.

Mapei's specification included formulations from Mapei Zero Line – with CO₂ fully offset in the entire life cycle, along with very low VOC EMICODE EC1 Plus-certified formulations for a safe installation environment.

During Neuman Aqua's pool preparation phase, a series of mortars were applied to repair concrete surfaces. They included Mapemortar HB R3 Zero, Planitop Smooth & Repair R4 Extra Zero, anti-corrosion Mapefer 1K Zero and Mapefill GP Zero. In addition, Mapei Mapeproof Swell and Planitop Smooth

& Repair R4 Extra Zero were used to seal around light fixtures and penetrations and Mapefix VE SF was used to anchor bolts for pool balustrades and ladders. To waterproof the pool tanks, Mapelastic Zero cementitious mortar was applied, along with Mapenet 150 – an alkali-resistant fibre glass mesh and Mapeband Easy rubber tape to form waterproof elastic joints. The screed specification included Topcem fast-drying hydraulic binder which was bonded with Eporip epoxy adhesive. Meanwhile, walls were levelled with Planitop Fast 330 rapid-set, fibre-reinforced cementitious mortar.

Before installation of tiles throughout wet areas, JP Tiling installed Mapeguard WP 200 alkali-resistant waterproofing and anti-fracture membrane and Mapeguard ST tape, using Mapeguard WP elastic cementitious adhesive to bond and seal the waterproofing before installation of tiles.

Mapei Keraflex Maxi S1 Zero cementitious adhesive was used to install ceramic tiles and mosaics throughout all areas, along with two grouts – Kerapoxy Easy Design anti-bacterial and acid/mould-resistant decorative epoxy grout and Ultracolor Plus – a fast-track cementitious grout featuring mould-resistant BioBlock and water-repellent DropEffect technology, also from the Zero Line. Primer FD bonding enhancer was applied to all movement joints which were then sealed with Mapei Mapesil AC mould-resistant silicone sealant.

The tile specification included 600 x 600mm and 600 x 300mm porcelain tiles and 200 x 100mm ceramic tiles installed throughout common areas and glass mosaics throughout the pool area.

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SPECIFY WITH CONFIDENCE

Kerakoll explains how its H40 Gel-Technology adhesive range delivers dependable performance across hotel, spa and pool projects, providing architects and specifiers with a simple, high-performance solution for even the most demanding installations.

When you are specifying for a prestigious project such as a hotel or spa, you need absolute certainty that even those products that are not visible will perform outstandingly. This is especially important in those areas subjected to heavy traffic, such as a hotel lobby, or constant exposure to damp and water, as well as attack by chlorine in a spa and pool environment.

Kerakoll's H40 family uses Gel-Technology for a range of innovative adhesives that can be used on even the most testing sites, safe in the knowledge that the installation will not fail.

Choosing which of the range to specify is very simple, as it has only four products to cover all possible substrate and material combinations, whether flexible or not. H40 Gel (standard set C2 TE S1) and H40 Advanced (rapid set C2 FTE S1), H40

Ultimate (rapid set C2 F S2) come in powder form and H40 Extreme (R2T) is a two- part hybrid gel.

The use of extra-large slabs has become standard in the more prestigious projects rendering it imperative to use an adhesive that makes it easy to fully bed the tile and supports its weight while also offering high resistance to shear stresses. The H40 Gel- Adhesives offer all of this and an extended open

time, allowing the tiler the time to be sure that the job is done correctly, giving architects and main contractors peace of mind, knowing that they are not storing up future problems.

Solid bedding and a strong adhesive bond are particularly important in areas subject to heavy traffic. H40 Gel-Adhesives distribute and absorb the stresses caused by dynamic loads through the structural bond with the rest of the installation.

In damp environments, such as spas and changing rooms, H40 Gel or H40Advanced, used in conjunction with Kerakoll's Nanodefense Eco tanking system offer a water resistant, long-lasting, reliable, bonded installation.

And in swimming pools, superior wettability and strong bonding create a monolithic bonded system even in constant contact with water making the H40 Gel-Adhesives perfect for pools.

Please contact Kerakoll UK Ltd on the details below for further information on H40, and why to specify the range with confidence.

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BEYOND CLEAN

Giorgio Rimini, Senior Director of Business Development (EMEA) at Microban International, explores how built-in antimicrobial technologies are enhancing the durability, hygiene and long-term performance of ceramic surfaces across healthcare, commercial and public spaces.

Previously, antimicrobial ceramic surfaces were largely confined to clinical environments such as hospitals, where cleanliness was uncompromising. Today, in addition to traditional healthcare, antimicrobial tile is becoming increasingly utilised in spaces such as commercial kitchens, bathrooms and communal areas.

This change reflects a shift in the market's perspective on how manufacturers and building owners view surfaces and their performance. There is now a growing focus on what happens to a surface between cleaning cycles, and how products can support cleaner, more resilient built environments over time.

High-traffic, moisture-prone surfaces can accelerate microbial growth, with bacteria doubling in number every 20 minutes on an untreated surface. Microbes can survive on a ceramic surface for several weeks, making it a vector for product-degrading bacteria while also increasing the risk of cross-contamination on other surfaces. In many circumstances, once microbes have begun to proliferate, demanding cleaning routines are required to keep growth under control. Conventional cleaning delivers only temporary results, leading to higher costs in cleaning fees and material replacements, as well as contributing to commercial waste that ends up in landfills.

Antimicrobial ceramic tiles help address this challenge by inhibiting microbial growth directly on the surface. Antimicrobial technologies can be successfully incorporated into the ceramic glaze of tiles, helping to prevent the growth of microorganisms. The technology becomes an intrinsic part of the glaze under firing conditions, meaning it doesn't wash off or wear away and works alongside an effective cleaning routine for continual surface protection. This helps to prevent microbial growth that can degrade the material, extending the usable lifetime of tiled surfaces and reducing the need for repeated product replacement.

Alternative types of antimicrobial treatment available in the market include photocatalytic technologies, such as titanium dioxide (TiO₂). However, TiO₂ requires strong UV light and moisture to produce Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS), limiting its ability to maintain antibacterial efficacy, especially indoors. TiO₂ has also been shown to react negatively with ammonia, which is a common ingredient in multi-surface cleaners. Unlike TiO₂ technologies, built-in antimicrobials do not require the simultaneous presence of strong UV light and water to effectively kill microbes. Built-in antimicrobial technologies are permanently and durably incorporated into various ceramic products, including wall and floor tiles, laminated tiles, and sanitaryware.

Built-in antimicrobial chemistries can exploit the antibacterial properties of silver to achieve long-lasting efficacy on treated surfaces. The primary difference between standard disinfectants and built-in technologies is their performance over time. Built-in technologies continue to reduce bacterial growth for the product's lifespan, whereas

standard disinfectants have limited residual activity once the surface dries. For example, SilverShield by Microban International operates a multi-modal attack, eliminating up to 99.9% of bacterial growth on ceramic surfaces. Integrated at the stage of manufacture, the silver ion active ingredient is constantly presented on the surface of a treated product, ready to be released 24/7. Notified according to the European Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR), this technology helps create inherently cleaner ceramic products without affecting the durability, colour or finish.

When using antimicrobial ceramics, manufacturers can provide an easy, cost-effective product that extends lifetime use. Antimicrobial ceramics are an effective option to equip tiled surfaces in commercial spaces with long-lasting product protection. Cleanliness is becoming a new requirement for performance, particularly in spaces where user experience and sustainability are priorities, such as commercial, consumer, healthcare and building environments.

Antimicrobial ceramic surfaces are helping to shape what modern tile should deliver in overall performance. By partnering with a trusted antimicrobial technology provider, manufacturers can create products that meet relevant requirements and sustainability standards, contributing to cleaner, more durable environments.

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PREPPED AND PRIMED FOR SUCCESS

Setcrete explains why thorough subfloor preparation is the foundation of every successful tile installation, highlighting the essential role of levelling compounds, primers and adhesives in achieving long-lasting performance and preventing costly flooring failures.

Before installing ceramic, porcelain or natural stone floor tiles, proper preparation of the subfloor will ensure the finished installation will maintain its integrity and aesthetic appearance throughout its lifetime.

Quite often, flooring installation failures do not manifest themselves immediately, but over weeks or months, as they are walked on and issues start to show up. For example, a loose ceramic tile or sections of missing grout are examples of flooring failures that occur because of poor or absent subfloor preparation.

Good floor preparation starts by ensuring the subfloor surface is in a sound condition, clean and free from dust, dirt, grease and contamination. New concrete must be a minimum 42 days old and cement screeds a minimum 28 days old before tiling. Timber bases must be rigid, stable and adequately ventilated and covered with a suitable non timber based intermediate layer.

For installation in wet locations with moisture-sensitive backgrounds, a suitable waterproofing system should be used to protect the substrate.

SMOOTHLY DOES IT

If the subfloor is rough and uneven, it may require a levelling compound to be installed first to create a smooth base, which also makes the installation easier and will enhance the aesthetic finish of the finished floor.

A levelling compound is also designed to provide the optimum surface for tile and other flooring adhesives, facilitating the ability of the adhesive to key in to the levelling compound

surface and maximise the bond strength between the adhesive and the subfloor.

Levelling compounds include everyday 'latex'-type options, which are available in light to medium duty applications, as well as enhanced formulations with additional properties. Examples include flexible levelling compounds that can be used over plywood subfloors and will accommodate a degree of movement as the floor is walked on, fast-tack formulations that are 'walk on hard' after just 30 minutes and ready to receive a floorcovering after just two hours, and even exterior options, which can be covered with porcelain tiles.

A suitable levelling compound can also be used to encapsulate electric underfloor heating cables. For hot water fed systems, the manufacturer of the system should be consulted for advice on how best to install it. Alternatively, Setcrete's Technical Service team can provide specific guidance, depending on the system being used.



Setcrete also recommends that after completing installations on subfloors incorporating underfloor heating, the heating system should not be run for 10 days. Following this period, the floor temperature must be gradually raised at 5C per day to its optimal operating temperature.

TILE ADHESIVE AND GROUT

Once the levelling compound has been applied and cured, the floor is then ready for floor tiles to be installed, using a suitable tile adhesive. Setcrete recommends using a tile adhesive that offers a degree of flexibility to accommodate small movements and vibrations in the subfloor, along with a flexible grout.

This is especially important in bathroom installations over timber subfloor structures, which should also be overboarded with flooring grade plywood, firmly screw-fixed to the subfloor. A flexible levelling compound, such as Setcrete High Performance, should then be used to smooth and level the subfloor before installing floor tiles. A suitable waterproofing system should be incorporated in the build-up.

In most cases, a standard set tile adhesive can be used for the installation, but if time is a factor, rapid set adhesives will allow grouting to take place from three hours, rather than waiting until the following day.

PRIME IMPORTANCE

In most circumstances it is essential to prime a subfloor before applying an adhesive. Without it, an absorbent subfloor will draw moisture out of the adhesive too quickly and compromise its performance.

When applied over non-absorbent subfloors, a primer will help to promote adhesion between the adhesive and the subfloor, by presenting a surface that the adhesive is able to readily key into.

TOP NOTCH TIP

Using a notched trowel of the correct notch size to apply flooring adhesive at the recommended coverage rate is essential to achieve optimum performance. Flooring adhesive manufacturers will recommend the correct notch size for a specific adhesive.

However, even if a trowel shows the notch size to be the correct one, if the trowel has been used for previous installations, it is important to check if it shows signs of being worn down as this will effectively reduce the notch size and, consequently, the amount of adhesive being applied.

<https://setcrete.co.uk>



LISTED SUCCESS

Mapei products played a key role in the transformation of the Grade II listed Central Building at the University of Nottingham during its carefully considered retrofit.

A Mapei tiling system has been used to complete an installation at University of Nottingham's revered Central Building on the Castle Meadow Campus. The installation, completed by Telling Finishings for main contractor, G F Tomlinson, spanned over 1500m², with Mapei anti-fracture membrane, adhesives and Profilpas profiles featuring in the specification.

At only 30 years old, Central Building was Grade II listed by Historic England in 2023, making it one of the youngest buildings to receive this designation. In April 1993, it achieved maximum points in a BREEAM environmental assessment, the first building ever to do so, demonstrating its long-standing environmental performance credentials.

During its retrofit, Bond Bryan Architects carefully respected and retained the building's distinctive character. The original structure has been preserved, complemented by a new sustainable timber frame supporting a striking glass roof and first-floor terrace with a winter garden. Additional enhancements include a new welcome reception area, Deli Central and a community research hub, all thoughtfully integrated into the revitalised scheme.

Through a considered specification process, Bond Bryan identified and specified suitable Mapei systems across various substrates to help achieve the required technical performance, durability and finish standards across the project. Mapei products included Mapeguard UM 35 – a waterproofing/decoupling anti-fracture membrane – which was applied to the ground-floor raised access flooring and first-floor 160mm thick timber frame to ensure a robust solution. Porcelain tiles from Pavigres' Milestone range (600 x 600mm) were then installed with fast-setting cementitious adhesive, Keraquick S1 Zero – a very low VOC EMICODE: EC1 Plus-certified formulation and part of Mapei's Zero Line, with CO₂ fully offset in the entire life cycle. Mapei Profilpas Projoint DIL NIN – a stainless steel expansion joint with an interchangeable elastic vinyl resin insert – was also installed to delineate tile bays, provide an attractive finish and offer optimal protection.

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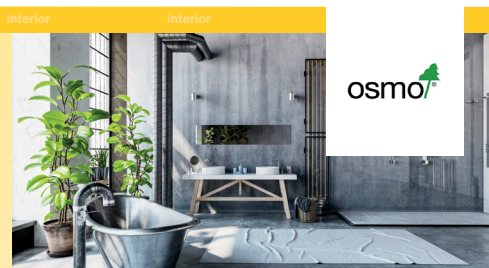
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