Making the most of wood

How the WPA works to improve the value and performance of wood
Wood protection technology brings many benefits:

- it makes possible the use of lower cost plantation-grown softwoods, to reduce pressure on more naturally durable, scarcer and higher value species.
- it makes possible the use of perishable and non-durable timber species and the sapwood of all species which might otherwise be discarded or have a short service life.
- it minimises costly remedial treatment and replacement or refurbishment of timber components at a later date in the life of the structure.
- the cost and energy required to produce wood with enhanced performance properties is low compared with man-made materials of comparable durability
- it locks carbon into timber for longer making a positive contribution to tackling climate change
- every m³ of wood used instead of other building materials reduces CO₂ emissions by an average of 1.1 tonnes. Combined with the CO₂ stored in the wood, each m³ saves a total of 2.0 tonnes
- growing trees absorb CO₂ and produce O₂. On average a typical tree absorbs, through photosynthesis, the equivalent of 1 tonne of carbon dioxide for every cubic metre’s growth, while producing the equivalent of 0.7 t of oxygen

Improving the value and performance of wood

The Wood Protection Association (WPA) is a technical and advisory organisation dedicated to improving the value and performance of wood and to the development and promotion of wood protection technology to support the use of wood as the sustainable, environmentally beneficial construction material of choice.

WPA is a not for profit organisation that has maintained considerable influence in the sector for over 75 years. Established as the British Wood Preserving Association in 1934, the WPA was re-launched in 2006 to reflect the expanding choice of wood protection technology. It is funded exclusively from the fees paid by its members who range from large, multi-national companies to small and medium size businesses, trade and technical associations and individuals.

WPA operations span four principal areas: preservative pre-treatments including creosote, wood modification technology, flame-retardants and wood coatings.
Our mission and objectives:

The WPA exists to promote demand for the products and processes that enhance the performance and value of wood and wood based products. In pursuing this Mission, we put the collective interests of our members first and aim, constantly, to:

- understand the needs of all our stakeholders and respond to them;
- promote confidence in wood and wood based products as a sustainable construction material;
- raise awareness of the benefits of wood protection amongst those with the ability to influence the specification and use of treated wood and panel products;
- defend existing markets and help to create and develop new market opportunities;
- be the focal point for the collection, assessment and dissemination of wood protection information;
- develop and promote sound technical, quality and training standards;
- develop and promote sound safety and environmental practices;
- maintain our lead body status among regulatory and standards setting organisations;
- foster good relations with other organisations that pursue similar aims;
- ensure adequate resources are available to deliver our Mission and objectives.

How the WPA works to benefit your business

The WPA works in many ways to influence demand for wood protection products and add value to timber and the operations of member businesses:

Influencing British & European Standards

The WPA is a technical adviser to British and European Standards setters and is actively involved in the preparation and revision of the standards and codes of practice relating to the industrial pre-treatment of wood and panel products and their end use applications. The WPA’s independent Chairman, Dr Chris Coggins, is also chairman of important committees such as B/515, which is the BSI committee responsible for the wood preservation standard and National Highways Sector Scheme 4. WPA also sits on many other BSI committees and is consulted by organisations with influence over building standards such as NBS and NHBC.

"Through the WPA, members have the opportunity to directly influence the development of wood protection standards in both the UK and Europe." 

Statutory and regulatory influence

Our working relationship with government agencies like the Health & Safety Executive, Environment Agency and Defra uniquely positions the WPA to monitor and influence the regulations relating to our industry. The biggest challenge facing timber treaters currently is the EU Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) permit system. WPA has been working with regulators on the best available techniques on which UK permitting is based until an EU guidance note is published by an EU committee on which WPA has expert input. WPA offers guidance on how to complete a permit application and a site specific consultancy service on compliance.

We are also working to provide the data required to permit the use of creosote beyond 2018 when the current EU approval runs out. Our deputy chairman, Willie Clason is leading this project on a European wide basis.

"Expert guidance on regulatory compliance has become an important new WPA service."
Lobbying opinion formers

The WPA is the voice of the UK timber treatment industry. We take this role seriously and pay particular attention to communicating clear messages about the technical and environmental benefits of treated wood and the inherent safety and effectiveness of controlled industrial protection techniques. We act decisively to defend our members and the sector as a whole against uninformed comment or products placed on the UK market that make performance claims that cannot be verified.

“No one flies the flag for wood protection quite like the WPA.”

Forum for generic technical discussion and validation

Members of the WPA include the leading suppliers of timber treatment technology and products worldwide. These organisations voluntarily share technical information and product news with the WPA through our Technical Committee. We serve the industry and our members by being the centre of knowledge, discussion and validation for the advice and best available techniques required in the production and use of treated wood. Our technical expertise is recognised by other trade bodies in the UK and around the world. WPA is frequently invited to speak about developments and activities in the UK at conferences staged by other organisations involved in wood protection such as NTR in Scandinavia and the Western European Institute for wood preservation in Brussels.

“The technical capabilities of the WPA are internationally recognised.”

Regulatory Affairs Consultancy

The wood protection industry is increasingly affected by Statutory Regulations. For even the largest of timber operations dealing with regulations relating to wood treatment can be difficult. As with the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) the principal regulatory bodies in the UK rely on the WPA’s expertise and now our members can too. In addition to publishing generic guidance on regulations as they arise WPA is now offering an individual business’ site specific and confidential consultancy service on regulatory compliance.

This service was launched to provide support for permit applications under IED and the positive feedback from our members has resulted in Consultancy becoming a permanent WPA service.

Research

In 2014, WPA initiated the UK’s biggest field trial of home grown softwoods. The trial will look at durability of heartwood and sapwood, treatment loadings and the benefits of incising as a means to informing British Standards specifications. The project will last 15 years and is seen by the timber industry as vital to growing the market for softwoods particularly in ground contact applications.

WPA Durability Trial of British Softwoods

Project details

- Species: Spruce, Pine, Douglas fir larch
- Duration: 15 years
- Test sites: Moray, Scotland
- Test item: WPA BRE 75mm x 75mm posts
- No.of posts: 780 at each site
- Specification:
  - treated to UC4
  - incised and treated to UC4
  - untreated
- Treatment: WPA approved preservatives
- Assessors: BRE

Objectives

- Assess the natural durability of UK grown plantation softwoods;
- Assess the benefits of incising technology;
- Compare different pre-treatment drying regimes on Sitka spruce;
- Compare the impact of different preservative loadings;
- Provide data to better inform BS 8417

Major Sponsors:

Forest Commission

Associate Sponsorship

Associate Sponsorship of this field trial is open to any business with an interest in the outcome.

BRE intends to give the field trial a high profile at their Wavford site to underline its importance to the timber supply chain.

BRE’s Ed Sutte (centre) explains to WPA Director Steve Young (left) and WPA Field Trial Project Manager, Gordon Evbank (right) the planned location for the post installation.
Improving buyer confidence in treated wood performance

**WPA Benchmark Quality Scheme**
The WPA operates a third-party quality assurance scheme for treated wood called Benchmark. Where ISO 9001 assesses management systems, the WPA Benchmark gets right to the heart of treated wood performance by assessing the treatment given to an individual component to verify that it is fit for purpose in line with the WPA Manual of Wood presentation to achieve BS 8417 performance requirements.

To complement the Preservation Scheme WPA Benchmark FR provides third party verification that a flame retardant has been correctly applied.

In collaboration with the Structural Timber Association (STA), WPA Benchmark has been expanded to include flame retardant processes in accordance with STA’s FR Build scheme for timber frame buildings under construction. This is the WPA Benchmark FR Build Scheme.

*All quality schemes operated by WPA are now under the Benchmark brand name.*

**Wood Preservative Product Approval Scheme**
In 2014, the WPA Benchmark of quality was further strengthened by the launch of a third-party approval scheme for wood preservatives used in pressure impregnation processes. For the first time in the UK, manufacturers of preservatives have the opportunity to have their efficacy data verified by an independent panel of experts appointed by the WPA. The section is voluntary and the preservative retentions approved by the WPA for a given application are published. The Table of approved products can be found in the Quality assurance section of our web site www.wood-protection.org

**WPA Benchmark Warranty Scheme**
The WPA is currently in discussion with insurers to introduce a national warranty scheme or bond for treated wood. It will be available for treaters with WPA Benchmark certificated products treated with a WPA approved preservative.

"WPA Benchmark gets right to the heart of treated wood performance"

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Publishing good practice and specification guides

The WPA produces a range of publications to promote good practice and correct wood protection specification. Our Wood Preservation, Flame Retardants and Modified Wood manuals are recognised as the ultimate reference source and are used by specifiers throughout the UK and are called up by organisations such NBS, NHBC and Highways Agency.

The Quality Guidance Notes published by WPA are mandatory controlled documents for firms seeking to include timber treatment within the scope of ISO 9001 certification. The WPA Code of Practice for timber treatment installations is referenced by Regulators throughout the UK as representing best available technology. The complete range of publications can be found on our website.

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Promoting treated wood products

Our marketing strategy is focused on helping to protect and develop markets for wood protection products and the processes that help to make wood the sustainable and low environmental impact material of choice.

We acknowledge that there are issues such as sustainability and environmental performance that need to be communicated on an industry wide basis. In this respect we are an original signatory of the Wood Industry Accord that requires a commitment to work closely with leading trade organisations like Confor, BWF, TTF, TRA, TDCA, STA, UKFPA and Wood For Good. WPA is committed to this Accord and continues to provide appropriate back up and practical support where there is a common interest to defend and grow markets for wood.
Helping to improve skills and knowledge

Failing to ensure employees are adequately trained to carry out their duties is an offence under UK law. The WPA is able to provide clear guidance to members on the type and scope of training required.

The WPA is also an Approved Centre of wood industry qualification body PIABC (part of IOM3) and is authorised to provide assessment for the NVQ2 Diploma in Wood Preservation.

We are also responsible for the wood preservation content and advice given on Wood Campus, an internet educational resource about wood and its use.

Join the WPA

• Joining the WPA adds immediate status and credibility to a business;
• It provides you direct access to independent help and advice;
• Demonstrates to regulators that the business takes a responsible approach to wood protection operations;
• Provides your business with a channel of communication to influence standards setters and regulatory bodies;
• Is the UK centre of excellence for wood protection technical and quality developments and, the natural champion of the wood protection industry.

Our strength and ability to influence is a reflection of the collective will of our members. All believe wood protection processes produce unique, value added materials and are committed to the long-term success and growth of the industry and the use of wood.

The role we play cannot be performed by an individual company or other, non-science-based, trade association. Funding is provided from membership subscriptions and the more we grow in numbers, the more effectively we can benefit our industry.

If your business has a commercial interest in wood protection then you really should join forces with the WPA to help shape the future of the industry.

Keeping you up to date about what’s happening

Communication with members and the wider industry to deliver news and information about wood protection is a key part of our role. We do this using five principal methods:

1. Through our website www.wood-protection.org which includes a members password protected area to access WPA publications and services
2. Electronic newsletters WPA News
3. Twitter – follow us on @woodprotection or logon to www.twitter.com/woodprotection
4. Annual Members Day held in March each year
5. Seminars – issues specific events such as how to apply for an IED permit

To obtain an application form and details of membership fees contact:

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