

Success story



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Building Research Establishment (BRE), Garston, Watford, England, UK and BRE Wales, Port Talbot, Wales, UK

WOODKNOWLEDGE WALES – A business development initiative for the Welsh Timber Industry

The Welsh Timber Industry, whilst very important to the national economy, is a fairly fragmented industry, made up of over 1700 businesses, dominated by small and medium sized enterprises. There has long been a desire for groups and companies to work together in an effort to develop a national strategy for the Welsh Timber Industry, and this has been given a major boost through an initiative led by BRE and BRE Wales. Entitled Woodknowledge Wales, it aims to provide the initial contact point for information relating to innovation in timber, creating business links between the forest sector, manufacturing companies and research providers, as well as ensuring the sector grows and prospers. In order to achieve this, two research officers have been employed to deal specifically with Welsh businesses, and three main tasks have been identified during the initial 3-year phase:

- *Set up and run an information gateway, as an aid to knowledge transfer*
- *Help in product testing and prototype manufacturing*
- *Provide a focal point for Research and Development*
- *Help develop a Welsh brand (which will be developed further by the sister group Woodsource Wales).*



Early activities have concentrated on setting up a dedicated information gateway, mainly through the use of a website (www.woodknowledgewales.co.uk). The research officers have been in contact with some of the companies across Wales, especially those involved in the construction sector. The aim of this was to establish the knowledge gaps currently existing and to try and provide the right information to help these companies. The initial surveys have dealt specifically with timber frame construction companies and sawmills active across Wales. The results from these initial surveys are being placed on the website, as well as being used to develop CPD-style presentations for the industry, local authorities and architects.



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Among the key product ranges currently under development with Welsh companies are:

Modification process and their implementation

- *Innovative use of small diameter timber*
- *New construction techniques using home-grown timber*
- *Sustainable construction methods*
- *Novel window designs*
- *Wood for energy*

Information is often passed onto industry through regular seminars held across Wales. This also provides companies with an opportunity to showcase their latest product ranges, and to develop new business links.



Working with others

Woodknowledge Wales operates through the efficient exchange of information and ideas between universities and companies within Wales. The group acts as a mediator in business development meetings, as well as helping focus ongoing work within Wales. The group are also active in multi-national co-operative programmes, where common factors are explored and resolved. Work will continue to build these links and to increase the use of Welsh timber within Wales and internationally.



Woodknowledge Wales has been set up through funding made available by the Welsh Assembly Government and Forestry Commission Wales. It and its sister operation Woodsources Wales both operate under the guidance of the Welsh Forest Business Partnership.

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