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TAKING STOCK

AN UPDATE FROM THE ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTORS' ASSOCIATION

Issue 22 July 2020

Online Hub supports EDA businesses

Wholesalers and affiliate manufacturers have turned to the Association's Covid-19 Hub for advice during the coronavirus pandemic – and will use it to steer their businesses out of the crisis

The electrotechnical sector is moving from crisis mode to recovery mode, but Covid-19 isn't going away any time soon. Businesses still need easy access to the latest news and information for all aspects of their operations – from how to keep staff, customers and suppliers safe, to the latest financial guidance.

That's why the EDA created the Covid-19 Hub at www.eda.org.uk. Since launch the Hub has become the most visited area of the EDA's website by some margin, offering an ever-wider range of information and resources in one central location. The Hub is updated daily, and EDA members and affiliates will find:

Resources & downloads A library of key documents including sector recovery plans, operational guidelines, letter templates and correspondence to and from government.

Branch guidance Here you can download the latest version of *Practical Guidance for Electrical Wholesale Branches*.

Wholesalers open RAG rating showing which EDA wholesaler members are open and their operating hours. If you'd like to amend your details, call Rose at the EDA on 020 3141 7355.



“Every business would be worse off without the work the EDA has done on our behalf”

Paul Jenner COO,
IBA Buying Group

Manufacturers open RAG rating showing which EDA affiliates are open and their operating hours. If you'd like to amend your details, call Rose on 020 3141 7355.

Surveys & research Monthly EDA surveys are a barometer of the impact of the crisis on the EDA wholesaler. This section also includes access to other sector research.

EDA Bulletins for Members Catch up with the e-bulletins issued to EDA wholesalers.

Webinars and videos Register, watch and re-watch videos, and share resources with your contractor customers.

Financial support summary Information on the latest furlough timescales, resources and links, plus a summary of other loans, grants and support packages.

PPE Checklists to tell you if the personal protective equipment you're buying is legal and genuine, plus who stocks what. If you're an EDA wholesaler or manufacturer and you have PPE available, call Rose on 020 3141

7355 to add or update your details.

An important resource for EDA businesses is *Practical Guidance for Electrical Wholesale Branches*. This document has more than 20 pages of advice and information on how to trade safely in all areas of a branch set-up.

Available to download from the Hub in full or as individual pages to hand to your team members, the second version was issued on Monday 8 June.

Adapt the guidance

The guidance can be adapted by EDA affiliate businesses, and it offers reassurance that wholesalers have the latest information to keep anyone who visits their branches safe.

Using the prevailing Construction Leadership Council's site operating procedures – and government advice for businesses – a panel of EDA members steered the development of the guidance. The EDA is grateful for their expertise and support.



Visit the Covid-19 hub for the most up-to-date business support.
www.eda.org.uk

FROM THE BOARDROOM



The past three months have been a challenging period for us all – and a strange time for me to arrive in the UK – but I had no hesitation in putting my hand up to become Chairman of EDA Data Services Ltd at the EDA's board meeting in March.

Based on my experience in the US, I know that an industry-owned product data pool is crucial for the future success of our sector: EDATA, the data pool created and managed by EDA Data Services, is developing apace with more than 20 leading manufacturers and 10 key whole-

salers already committed to the project and more signing up weekly.

EDATA is all about high-quality product data. Rather than focusing on high numbers of stock keeping units, we are working with manufacturers to get data that is complete and accurate and has the ETIM technical data at its core.

Importantly, we are setting up benchmarks and standards so we can report on the quality of that data. This will ensure that, at all points along our supply chain, websites, ERP systems, e-shops and cata-

logues are enhanced with product data that is rich and accurate.

This will save both time and money and ensure that new products get to market at speed. Ultimately it will deliver an enhanced customer experience and higher sales for those who make the effort with their data. You'll find more about EDATA on page 3 – I urge you to get involved and look forward to working with you on this project.

Edgar Aponte

EDA Board of Management

T: 020 3141 7350 E: info@eda.org.uk training@eda.org.uk W: www.eda.org.uk



Electrical Distributors' Association



ElectricalIDA



@eda_uk

Keeping the conversation going

A little thing like a global pandemic isn't going to stop the electrical distribution sector from talking – and the latest technology is helping

The electrotechnical sector has many skilled networkers, and the challenges of the past few months have meant an adjustment to digital platforms. Whether Teams or Zoom, we are all networking online in a way that would have seemed unthinkable before the pandemic. Whether we will all rush back to face-to-face networking remains to be seen, but in the meantime the EDA has made every effort to both facilitate and stimulate dialogue.

'Taking Stock & Talking Shop' has become the theme of regular state-of-the-sector Zoom conversations between the EDA Board of Management, the heads each of the four buying group members (ANEW, AWEBB, Fegime UK and the IBA) and representatives from EDA Affiliated Members and, where applicable, their relevant trade association.

Affiliates in common

Colleagues from BEAMA, the Lighting Industry Association and the British Cables Association joined the Zoom sessions with the Affiliated Members we have in common. A further session was held for EDA Affiliates that are not part of another trade association.

These Zooms provided a platform to share news from across the construction sector – particularly through the EDA's links with the Construction Leadership Council and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – for

manufacturers and wholesalers to share their business challenges, and to foster collaboration as the sector limbers up for recovery.

Feedback has been positive, with monthly EDA Board and Affiliates sessions in the diary. Invitations are sent out by EDA CEO Margaret Fitzsimons to lead contacts at each EDA Affiliated Member (if you have any questions on the sessions, call the EDA on 020 3141 7350).

Digital Board

Weekly virtual catch-ups have become the norm for the EDA Board of Management. These Monday 'temperature checks', led by EDA President Chris Ashworth of CEF, discuss feedback from the wider construction sector, the implications for the electrotechnical sector and how best to support the EDA membership.

Margaret Fitzsimons, EDA CEO, leads discussions during a Zoom session with the LIA and our common Affiliated Members



EDA Affiliates who are also members of BEAMA catch up

Dr Howard Porter, CEO of BEAMA, sets the scene for his members



Digitalisation in overdrive

Last issue, we reported on EDATA – a central source of product data for wholesalers – and work on the project has continued despite the coronavirus crisis



One lasting legacy of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic will be a greater familiarity with e-commerce. Just as consumers who had never bought groceries online have turned to home deliveries during lockdown, so industry has embraced online purchasing.

In an attempt to run businesses efficiently while limiting staff contact, e-commerce has moved centre stage in B2B as well as B2C sectors.

But for this to work, manufacturers and distributors must be able to share product data, and many do so using industry-owned data pools. Such pools are common in other markets and sectors, but the UK's electrotechnical sector has until recently been lagging behind.

The EDA has for years advocated the digitalisation of the electrical distribution sector. Its latest initiative in this area is EDATA, a central source of manufacturers' product data managed on a not-for-profit basis by the industry, for the industry.



EDATA founder members at a June webinar to hear about digitalisation progress

has a board of six industry representatives, chaired by Edgar Aponte of Rexel UK. Also, there is a steering group of representatives from the 10 founder wholesalers and 15 founder manufacturers.

The current focus is on onboarding data from the founder manufacturers. Despite the lockdown, initial onboarding workshops have been held with all 15, and senior people at each manufacturer have taken part in update meetings.

Progress at each of the manufacturers has been at a different pace – and onboarding objectives are agreed to match each manufacturer's particular circumstances.

The objective is that data from all 15 manufacturers will be available by the end of the year – and this appears to be achievable. The focus is on the quality of the data so wholesalers can access it and use it on their e-commerce sites.

The EDATA team is also keen to establish robust governance processes for handling the data. Criteria for gold, silver and bronze level data have been drafted. Work has started to create and publish standards and best practice guidelines for all parties.

EDATA currently contains three categories of data:

Master data. This includes information such as a description of the product, its product family, marketing bullet points and a Global Trade Item Number.

Digital assets. These assets include images and data sheets.

Technical attributes. Attributes are stored in the international standard ETIM format. ETIM is not a data repository, but a way to structure data. Powerful search and filter operations will be possible when it is included on a wholesaler's website.

Other types of product data will be added in line with advice from the steering group. In the meantime, release 8 of ETIM is due in September, and contains enhancements requested by UK companies.

Finding solutions

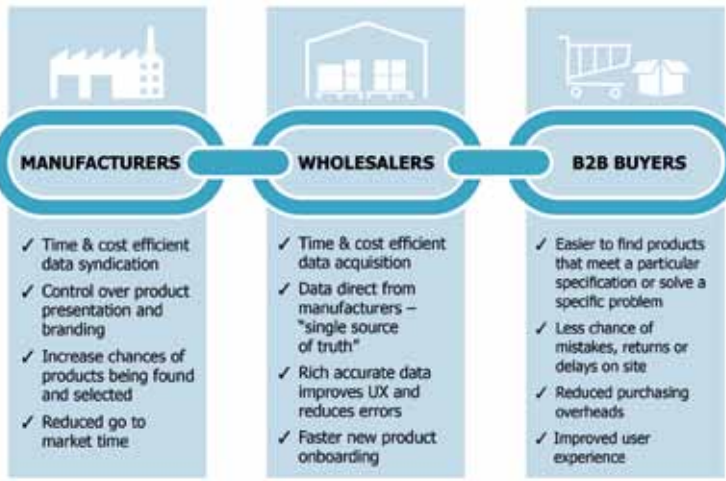
So-called solution providers – companies that specialise in product information management systems, enterprise resource planning and similar technologies – are critical to the success of the project. To this end, the EDA has created a new affiliate category for such organisations (see *article opposite*).

EDA Data Services is now working with wholesalers to embed high-quality product data from EDATA into their digital strategies. On 3 June, there was an online meeting of the 10 founding wholesalers, and that will be followed up with one-to-one meetings.

EDATA now wants to recruit further manufacturers. It is targeting 25 from EDA affiliates, and would welcome approaches from others.

New company

To facilitate EDATA, the Association has formed a new company – EDA Data Services Limited. The company



New members and affiliates – and the Association's first solution provider

Four businesses have joined the EDA since the last issue of *Taking Stock* – two wholesalers, a service provider and a company in the new affiliate membership category of solution provider.

Solution providers are software and related services businesses critical to the success of the Association's digitisation projects (see *opposite*).

The wholesalers – both members of the AWEBB buying group – are AW Electrical Supplies Ltd, which became a member on 1 April, and Mastertrade Supplies Ltd, which joined the fold on 1 June.

On 1 May, the Association's first solution provider affiliate was NG15 Ltd. Service provider WERCS joined a month later.

Wholesalers



Solution provider



Service provider



DIARY DATES FOR EDA MEMBERS AND AFFILIATES

In light of the global coronavirus outbreak, **all events are subject to change**. For the latest information, visit www.eda.org.uk or call 020 3141 7350.

Wednesday 8 July 2020
Starting your ETIM journey: a webinar for manufacturers
At 2pm for about 45 minutes.
Visit www.etim-uk.co.uk to register, or call Kiera at the EDA on 020 3141 7352

Wednesday 29 July 2020, 11am, 2pm
Friday 31 July 2020, 11am
Taking Stock & Talking Shop – Zoom dialogues with affiliated members
Look out for your invitation.

TENTATIVE
Monday 14 September 2020
EDA Regional Business Forum
Southampton
Book online at www.eda.org.uk

TENTATIVE
Wednesday 23 September 2020
EDA Regional Business Forum
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Book online at www.eda.org.uk

TENTATIVE
Tuesday 6 October -
Friday 9 October 2020
EDA Scottish Function
Networking event at Geneagles.

TENTATIVE
Thursday 5 November 2020
EDA Regional Business Forum
Surrey
Book online at www.eda.org.uk

TENTATIVE
Tuesday 1 December 2020
ETIM UK Digitalisation Forum
Venue to be confirmed.

Thursday 4 March 2021
EDA Annual Awards Dinner
InterContinental Hotel, Park Lane

Wednesday 14 April 2021
EDA Regional Business Forum
Coventry
Book online at www.eda.org.uk

Thursday 6 May -
Saturday 8 May 2021
EUEW Annual Business Convention, Barcelona
For members committed to growing their business in Europe.

Every month during the coronavirus crisis, the EDA has quizzed its wholesaler members about the challenges they have faced to form a picture of the sector's response to the pandemic. This is a summary – visit Surveys & Results in the Covid-19 Hub at www.eda.org.uk for the full results



A question of Covid

COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY RESULTS



IMPACT

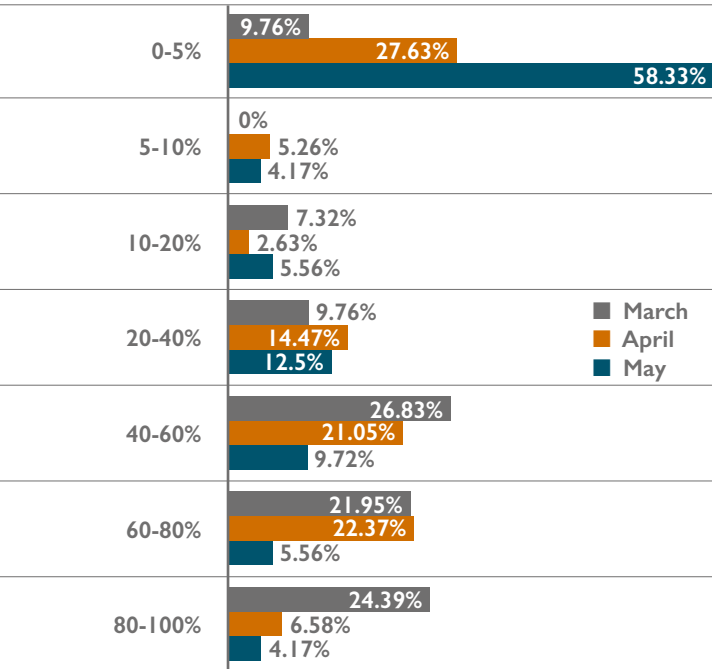
Estimate the proportion of business operations that are suspended as a result of Covid-19.

Wholesalers' answers to this question reveal a clear change as lockdown has gone on.

Back in March, most respondents said a high proportion of operations had been suspended – most respondents were in the 40-60%, 60-80% or 80-100% brackets.

In contrast, in May the majority of respondents – nearly 60% – said only 0-5% of operations were suspended, with only 4.17% of responses in the 80-100% bracket. Wholesalers have clearly discovered ways to continue doing business in spite of the restrictions.

With lockdown being lifted, figures for June may be more optimistic still.



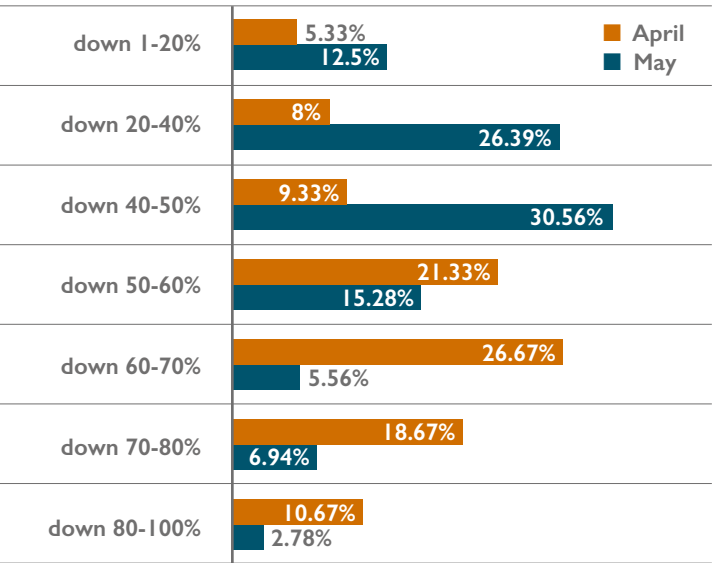
I'm always optimistic, but that's not to say there aren't more challenges ahead

Wholesaler respondent, May

58%
of wholesalers say only 0-5% of operations were suspended in May

The effects of Covid-19 will likely be stretched... some sectors will take 12-24 months to recover

Wholesaler respondent, May



Compared with the same period last year, to what extent do you estimate your turnover has been affected?

Again, responses to the survey indicate a reversal of opinion as business has adapted to the effects of the pandemic.

Whereas respondents tended to estimate a drop in turnover over 50% in April, by the following month they had become more optimistic, estimating a lower impact on turnover.

However, the effect of the lockdown and other government restrictions has been significant, and full recovery is likely to be some time away. Some respondents reckoned it could take as long as two years.

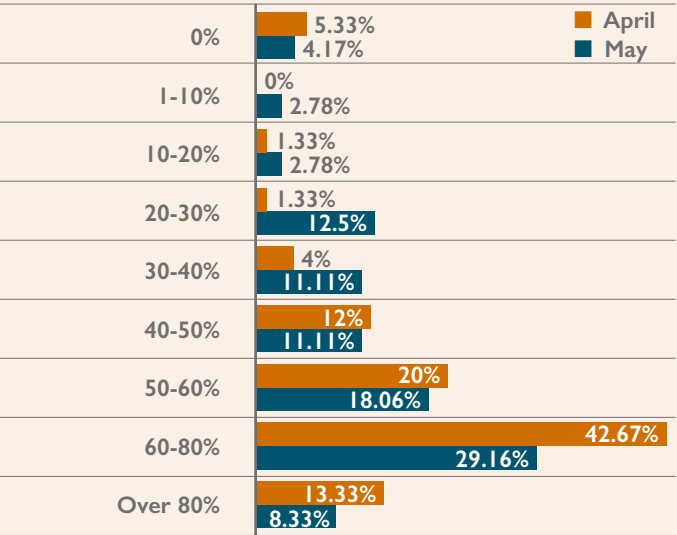
SUPPORT

What percentage, if any, of your team have been furloughed?

Perhaps the most significant of the government's support measures for business is the furlough scheme – the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

We asked wholesalers if they had furloughed members of their teams in April and May.

However, nearly 95% of respondents indicated that they had brought furloughed staff back into their businesses during May and early June. They said that 35% of previously furloughed staff had returned.



Furloughed staff are returning to their jobs to find they have fundamentally changed

Wholesaler respondent, May

Which financial support packages have you used?

The most popular form of financial support for companies is the deferral of VAT and income tax

payments – favoured by two-thirds of respondents. Other popular packages were small business grant

funding and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, which offers loans of up to £5

million for SMEs. The Bounce Back Loan started in late April/early May and may become more popular.

Bounce Back Loans	13.04%
Statutory Sick Pay relief for SMEs	6.82%
Small business grant funding of up to £10,000	56.36%
Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme	35.29%
Deferring VAT and income tax payments for 3 months	67.21%
Lending facility to help support liquidity among larger firms	7.14%
HMRC Time to Pay Scheme	8.89%

RECOVERY

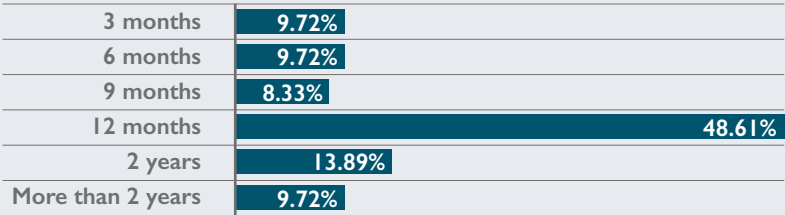
How long will it be before business reaches pre-Covid-19 levels?

Nearly one half of respondents to the survey for May believed it will take about a year to return to 'business as usual'.

The remainder were split fairly equally between two groups – one of pessimists and another of optimists. Nearly one in

ten thought normality would be restored within three months, but another 10% believed full recovery would take two years or more.

Two-thirds of respondents thought that a return to pre-Covid business levels would take from one to two years.



Which three business challenges are your most pressing at this time?

Wholesalers were asked to choose three challenges from a list.

The most common cited concerns in May were ongoing uncertainties when it came to business forecasting, and the future viability of their customers.

Accessing government financial support was mentioned the least.

Recent changes to staff furlough rules	16.9%
Establishing an e-commerce operation	19.72%
Whether my team will feel safe returning to work	32.39%
Cash flow challenges caused by a slowdown in payments	25.35%
Cash flow challenges caused by stricter terms from suppliers	5.63%
General uncertainty and challenges over forecasting	74.65%
Accessing financial support through the government's schemes	2.82%
Implementing social distancing changes to enable us to trade	25.35%
Concern of whether customers will remain viable and return	66.2%
Dealing with customers who don't respect social distancing	11.27%

Recently we have seen a serious upturn, with different sectors returning to work and engaging in business. While not at pre-Covid-19 levels, some retail and housebuilding is taking place

Wholesaler respondent, May

68%
of wholesalers were more optimistic in May than they were a month before



E-mobility for the masses

ABB Ltd, the global expert in smart mobility, smart buildings and smart homes, brings you the Terra AC wallbox – built on ABB's 130-year heritage of accessible technology leadership – for safe, smart and sustainable electrification and informed by the company's expertise in e-mobility.

With a decade of experience in innovating, installing and maintaining e-mobility infrastructure, including several nationwide charger networks, ABB is trusted by some of the world's biggest brands to provide smart mobility solutions from highway to home.

No other wallbox provider has a portfolio as strong as ABB, the company says, spanning the AC and DC charger market and offering tailored, intelligent and connected charging solutions for any location and business.

These attributes combine to make ABB the home of charging, and the wallbox an essential component of connected living. The Terra AC wallbox is the superior EV home charger, delivering high-value quality, futureproof flexibility, and advanced safety and protection.

<https://new.abb.com/uk/smarter-mobility>

Cembre upgrades its marking system software

MARKINGENIUS®MG3 from **Cembre Ltd** has become the industry-leading system for label marking, commonplace in panel builder and OEM workshops. More recently it has received a GeniusPRO upgrade with many new features.

This high-resolution 300 dpi thermal transfer printer can produce tags for cables, pipes and tubes, and terminal block markers. Also, it can create legends and labels for electrical panels, components and equipment.

Compact, ergonomic, clean and quiet, MARKINGENIUS®MG3 can be located anywhere – panel workshop, office or even on site.

MARKINGENIUS®MG3 will reproduce clip art images, drawings, barcodes and bitmaps down to very small sizes. Each monochrome ribbon can print more than 300,000 4 x 10mm cable tags covering the full printable surface.

Carriage loading and unloading are rapid. Pigment from the resin ribbon dries instantly.

www.cembre.co.uk



Continuity made easy

Uninterruptible power supplies are essential for any business that needs continuity of power. From bakeries and restaurants to pharmacies and shops, a UPS system ensures everything is up and running 24/7, protecting revenues and reputations – and providing peace of mind.

Residential buildings also have critical equipment that must be kept 'always on'. If power was cut, control would be lost for things like heating, lighting, blinds and even garage doors. Also consider security systems, major appliances, network equipment and entertainment devices. Power outage could result in loss of life if a home contains critical medical equipment or aquariums.

UPS can protect a home's valuable assets and even extend equipment life, delivering reliable power in the event of a surge or an outage.

The **Schneider Electric Ltd** Easy UPS series is easy to install, easy to use and easy to service. It's a versatile UPS developed to handle inconsistent power conditions while delivering the quality millions of professionals trust around the world.

www.se.com/uk/en/work/products/product-launch/local/easy-ups/

Design Wiring Regs labels using your phone

Every professional knows how important it is to work to the current Wiring Regulations. With the free Mobile Cable Label Tool app from **Brother UK Ltd** your customers can quickly and conveniently design compliant labels on their smartphones or tablets and print them on the PT-E550W. All they have to do is download the application and then search for their supported device.

The app has templates for cable wrap, cable flag, patch panel, faceplate and now for EV charging notices. This means contractors can produce clear and durable labels instantly on site.



If the templates supplied do not meet your customer's needs, the general labelling option allows text, symbols, images, barcodes and frames to be added to their layouts.

Brother's market-leading machines are built to last and create labels to match.

www.brother.co.uk/business-solutions/electrician-and-network-infrastructure

Unistrut TTT triple-slotted channel

The latest addition to the **Unistrut** metal framing system is the TTT triple-slotted channel. It has multiple fixing points along the three sides of the channel, so it has a variety of configurations that cannot be achieved with single-slotted channel.

TTT is suitable for creating the framework on projects, and it can be used on modular designs from H frames to large frames, so services can be secured with clips and clamps from any of the slotted sides.

TTT is manufactured to the same high quality as the rest of the Unistrut range, with full system assurance supplied through load data and unique quality batch number markings for full traceability.

TTT Channel is designed in the standard PI 41 x 41mm profile and is available pre-galvanised or hot-dip galvanised in 3 and 6m lengths conforming to BS EN 6946.

www.unistrut.co.uk



BCC progresses with IDH consolidation

British Cables Company is closer to completing the consolidation of Wilms Group sister company Irish Driver Harris (IDH) into BCC's Manchester factory.

BCC's commercial director Paul Farrell says: 'Around 60 per cent of the production machinery had been relocated and was operational before the Covid-19 situation arose, so the timescale for completion has been delayed 2-3 months. In the meantime, the first phase of manufacturing for 6491B and 2491B cables has been successfully completed and we now have BASEC approval certificates. Huge stocks of products have been manufactured and are held for distribution.'

'We now have a portfolio including 6491B, 2491B, 318_B, 624_B, Guardian BS8436, fire-resistant cables Kilflam™ 1000 single core, Kilflam™ 2000 standard and Kilflam 3000™ enhanced.'

'I am also delighted to welcome Barry Turnstill to the sales team. Barry will cover London and the South East region.'

www.britishcablescompany.com

The sound of silence

For electrical wholesalers and electricians looking for bathroom fans that offer both powerful extraction and silent running, **Vent-Axia's** new and improved Silent Fan ticks all the boxes.

Still the quietest bathroom fan on the market – 12dB(A) – the range now includes eight models that are more flexible and give electricians and households more choice. The Silent Fan range is rated IP45 and includes variable speed models, humidistat options and a warranty up to five years long.

Three variable speed intermittent models are suitable for most applications with basic, timer and humidistat options. The variable speeds provide added flexibility during installation because electricians can adjust fan speed to a project's needs. For example, if a fan has to cope with long ducting, the electrician can turn up the speed to achieve the required airflow at a sound level that is acceptable to the household. The Silent Fan stays quiet even with longer duct runs and higher air flow.

www.vent-axia.com



Innovating the present, manufacturing the future



Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, the calls for faster installations, safer working environments and technological advancements were getting louder by the day. Innovation was the answer – offering new, better ways of working.

With society beginning its slow return to normality, it's more important than ever for businesses to use every advantage at their disposal to bounce back quickly and efficiently.

Metpro aims to be at the forefront of innovation. Combining its in-house expertise and facilities with industry innovators, it can conceptualise, design, prototype and manufacture new products.

Examples are its Rollatray and Rapid Saddle. These products offer labour savings of 90 and 40 per cent respectively, and have been designed to reduce installation times, offer significant labour savings and provide key health and safety benefits. They are available in a variety of sizes and finishes.

www.metpro.co.uk

Fire-rated downlights for all ceiling types

Ovia Lighting's INCEPTOR and FLAME-GUARD fire-rated downlights are subject to strict testing to ensure they offer full compliance and have the corresponding test certification.

With the increasing use of I-joists in floor construction, the National House-Building Council (NHBC) has updated its technical guidance on recessed light fittings in ceilings to intermediate floors in houses. Test evidence must demonstrate that recessed downlights are suitable for a similar I-joist and plasterboard combination.

Ovia has completed further fire-resistance testing to show that its fire-rated downlights satisfy the new NHBC guidelines. The testing was carried out by Efectis, a major player in fire science.

For years, fire-rated downlights have caused confusion, with many manufacturers making claims they cannot back up. The new guidance makes it clear that only correctly tested products can be used in the type of floor construction in which they are being fitted.

www.oviauk.com



Doncaster Cables: the great British cable

Doncaster Cables is the largest British-owned general wiring manufacturer in the UK. As the electrotechnical sector, like many others, looks to a future beyond Covid-19, there has never been a better and more important time to buy British.

Manufacturing since 1984, Doncaster Cables offers wholesalers more than 3,000 stock lines of cables and flexibles including specialist cables such as FIRESURE®, specifically developed to meet demand for cost-effective fire-resistant cables, and EV-Ultra® for EV charger installations. Doncaster

has also improved its cable calculator, which now includes multiple cables and installation methods.

The company's experienced and dedicated staff is committed to developing and improving customer service. Plus you have access to trained specialist technical staff.

Doncaster Cables has third party approvals from BASEC, the Loss Prevention Certification Board (LPCB), CSA and UL. It is also a member of the Approved Cables Initiative (ACI).

www.doncastercables.com



Construction sector plans its coronavirus recovery

The construction industry has set out a recovery plan for the sector, which has been pummelled by the coronavirus pandemic

Just how hard has the coronavirus pandemic hit the construction sector in general and wholesalers in particular? Our survey on pages 4 and 5 gives some indication of the effect on the distribution sector, but for a broader view, we must turn to a document published by the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) – a body that operates between the industry and government to improve efficiency, skills and growth in construction.

That document is *Roadmap to Recovery*, and it sets out a strategy to drive the recovery of the construction and built environment sectors on which electrical wholesaling businesses depend. But first it describes the impact of the coronavirus crisis on construction (see graph, below left).

The report uses a number of yardsticks to assess the economic health of the sector. For instance, figures from the Office of National Statistics suggest that construction activity fell by 2.6% in the first quarter of the year, and by 5.9% in March alone.

UK Construction Purchasing Managers Index is a barometer of the performance of the sector, and

incorporates information supplied by purchasing managers. This gives an early indication of the state of the market.

A figure below 50 suggests the construction industry is contracting. In March it was 39.3, and it plummeted to 8.2 in April.

More directly related to electrical distribution, the Construction Products Association reckons that construction output will fall by a quarter this year. And the Builder's Merchants Federation reported a decline in sales of 6.7% between the last quarter of 2019 and the first of 2020.

Sales of plumbing, heating and electrical products fell by 7.4%.

Recovery

So far, so gloomy. But with lockdown being eased and companies learning to work within the strictures imposed by the government, the Construction Leadership Council feels it is in a position to chart a course out of the crisis.

The Council says recovery will be gradual, with most taking place next year. Lost output will take about two years to recover, it says (see graph, below right).



Construction
Leadership
Council

Throughout its report, the Council mentions that the construction sector is an ecosystem that depends not only on related professions such as architecture and engineering to secure projects, but also on a supply chain that includes manufacturers and distributors. As a result, it says, a single industry plan is essential to coordinate activity and 'restart' the whole ecosystem.

So the report suggests that – among other things – the CLC will have to gather information about product availability and supply, the extent to which distributors are operating and the demand for products.

The plan

The recovery plan has three phases:

Restart In this phase, companies will restart work on their projects and programmes to the highest level possible while following government guidance. Distributors will have to develop and roll out training for staff to ensure safety. They should aim to move staff off the job retention scheme as quickly as possible.

They should also share information about product supply and demand with manufacturers and construction

firms. The CLC says all parties in the supply chain should commit themselves to prompt payment.

Reset This phase is intended to establish a 'robust pipeline' of work across the construction ecosystem – including wholesalers. Demand interventions from government will be needed to support firms throughout the sector.

Critical to this phase is the wider adoption of digital technologies in the supply chain. This, says the CLC, will improve data sharing, improving efficiency, productivity sustainability and product safety.

CLC says Apprenticeship Levy contributions should be flexible, and Budget commitments to apprenticeship funding should be met.

Reinvent Part of the 'reinvention' of the sector is the improved energy and heat performance of buildings, and a greater emphasis on whole-life performance of buildings – rather than simply cutting costs.

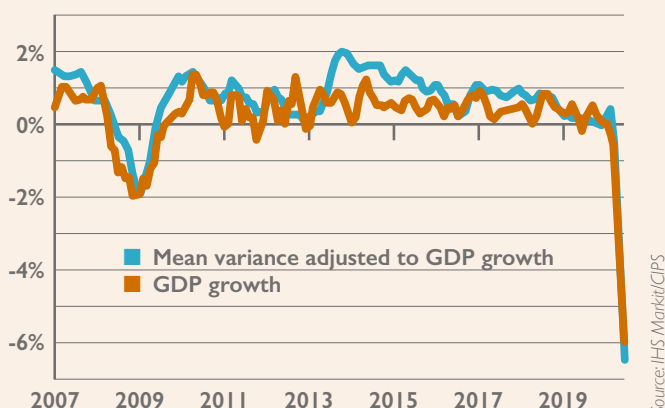
Also, the Council is keen to see more collaborative forms of working on major projects and programmes, including more collaborative contractual structures and approaches.

Ahead of the curve

The electrical distribution sector already advocates many of these approaches to digitisation, training and cooperation throughout the supply chain.

As the sector prepares to enter the post-Covid-19 world, wholesalers are ready to join forces with the rest of the construction industry to meet the CLC's ambition to create a more highly skilled, better value supply chain.

UK output index and GDP growth



Quarterly UK GDP

