Wood Technology Group Autumn-Winter 2025 Newsletter

Welcome to the latest Wood Technology Group (WTG) newsletter. With activity in England (Timber in Construction Roadmap 2025), Wales (launch of Making Wood Work for Wales - the Timber Industrial Strategy) and Scotland (publication of a list of preferred future timber species) it feels like 2025 has been a very busy year! And that's before you add in the WTG's flagship event Timber 2025…

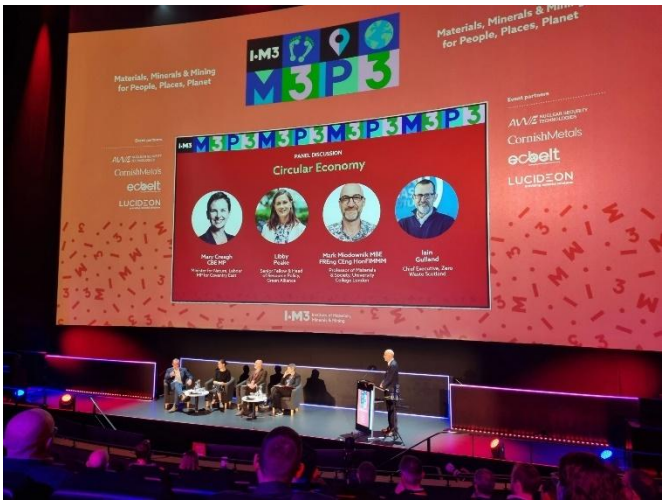
We hope you enjoy the round up of some of the activities of the WTG and some highlights from the industry and academia.

Morwenna Spear FIMMM

Successful Timber 2025 conference in Birmingham

This year we took a new approach to the Timber conference and scheduled it as a satellite event to the IOM3's flagship event, M3P3 (Materials, Minerals, Mining, People, Planet, Place). This was a good opportunity to encourage cross-discipline interaction, and we welcomed members from other technical communities to the sessions.

Many other aspects were shared with the wider M3P3 event - including poster space, trade stands and exhibits, and the social evening - which was great fun! It didn't take long between a inter technical community Jenga game emerged, with some impressive results!



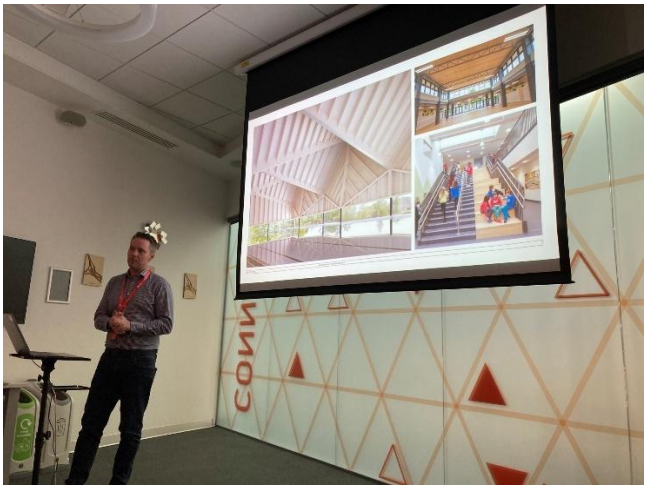


Images: Shared activities with the M3P3 conference - Circular Economy panel session and evening social event

The technical content of the conference centred on three main themes: future for forestry and timber industries, wood properties and innovations, and wood in the built environment. We kicked off the day with a presentation by Rob MacKenna of James Jones sawmills, considering the future of sawmilling and discussing some impressive developments in mechanisation and automation as well as the important role of timber in combating climate change. This was followed by Caroline Harrison from the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) who the WTG would like to collaborate with more in future - connecting two important sides of the same value chain. Marlene Cramer of Edinburgh

Napier University then introduced us to the increased body of work considering birch as an important species for the future - but here in the UK and in Europe. And Jiar Sadiq also of Edinburgh Napier talked us through a very innovative building retrofit project featuring many timber products to excellent effect.





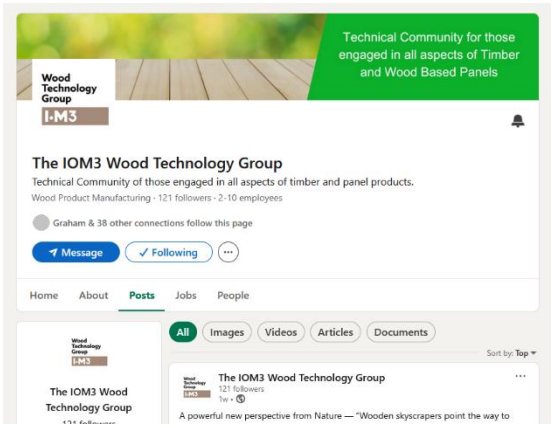
Images: Rob MacKenna and Andrew Skinner presenting at Timber 2025

We were very pleased to have a keynote talk by Andrew Skinner of Elliott Wood architects, who presented material from the recent publication the Commercial Timber Guidebook - featuring aspects of design for durability, considerations about remedial treatments in mass timber buildings, and design of timber buildings for fire safety. This set us up for a very interesting session with presentations by Davina Wang (Cambridge University) and Tabitha Binding (Passivhaus Trust and Coaction Training CIC). This session led to a lively debate about the ideal construction of timber walls, breathability, moisture diffusion and many other technical aspects.

In the middle of the afternoon we joined the M3P3 conference in the main auditorium for the circular economy panel discussion featuring a talk by Mary Creagh MP and debate with Mark Miodownick (University College London), Libby Peake (Green Alliance) and Iain Gulland (Zero Waste Scotland) facilitated by (or perhaps interrogated by) experienced journalist Roger Harrabin.

The most diverse session considered the properties of wood - and ranged from super black wood (with potential application in advanced optics and high technology or defence industries) by Prof Phil Evans of University of British Columbia, through to wood protection with an innovative stabiliser by Mike Attfield of Energenics. We heard about microcrystalline cellulose in capacitors and electronic components from Zainab Saleem (Bangor University) as well as the mathematical similarities between wood-water calculations and semiconductor theory from Cameron Belden (Swansea University) and the relative benefits of traditional YakiSugi treatments compared with industrial alternatives from Andy Pitman (Filros Timber Consultancy). All fascinating glimpses into the many diverse faces of our wonderful renewable, sustainable material!

New LinkedIn profile for the Wood Technology Group



Some of you will have been following the Wood Technology Group on LinkedIn for quite some time now. But did you know we now have a profile there rather than a group? https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-iom3-wood-technology-group/

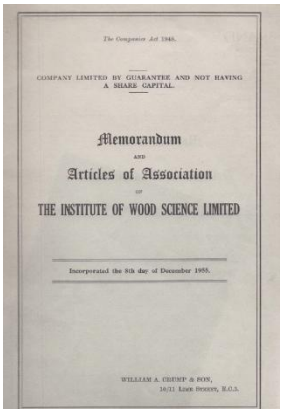
We found the membership settings of the old group quite restrictive. Members of the group also had to remember to click to see updates on the page periodically - so traffic had diminished.

So we have created a new profile, which you don't have to join, but can simply 'follow' in order to get updates into your LinkedIn feed! Use the link below to access the page and click Follow. We'll be using it more in the future.

Wood Technology Group

Ongoing celebrations - 70 years of wood science

In 2024 we celebrated 15 years since the merger of the IWSc with the IOM3. This year have continued celebrating - this time it is the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Institute of Wood Science. The IWSc was an enormous influence and driver of change for wood science research and wood industry developments in the UK during an era of dramatic progress in wood processing.


COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING A SHARE CAPITAL

Memorandum
AND
Articles of Association
OF
THE INSTITUTE OF WOOD SCIENCE LIMITED

Incorporated the 8th day of December 1955.

The Institute of Wood Science was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 8th December 1955. The purpose was "to advance public education in the study of wood and allied subjects in furtherance of the advancement of technical, scientific, practical and general knowledge in the subject" and this led to a thriving organisation that has driven change and high quality technical and academic skill in the industry.

The formation of the IWSc journal in 1958 and later the establishment of an annual conference (1968) further boosted the excellence of timber research in the UK. The WTG today stands on the shoulders of these achievements, and the many characters from the history of the wood science community.

One excellent opportunity to familiarise yourself with some of these characters is the recent paper on Presidents of the Institute of Wood Science (https://doi.org/10.1177/20426445241246844), which was then followed by a supplement to the Spring 2025 Newsletter on WTG chairs over the 15 years (https://www.iom3.org/e/t/c/393667F9-C326-461B-9316814DDC81BF25/?link=5085A8E2-AE93-43F6-8FA4BB1971618223).

In this newsletter issue we have brought this up to date by releasing a new supplement looking at the other characters who had influence in the Institute of Wood Science in various ways over the years - many played key roles without being Chairs. Once again, Andrew True has been busy digging in the

archives, asking people about their recollections and assembling an interesting glimpse of the many activities over the years. The review also includes some info about the Australian Branch of the IWSc (this was one of several international branches active over the years). We also learn about various committees and past directors. It is available in the Documents area of the WTG page, once you have logged in as a member (https://www.iom3.org/group/wood-technology-group/document.html?id=ECD87A57-F6B6-4495-A1C97AE0BF8B2B01).

A busy year in timber strategy

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, 2025 has been a very busy one for timber in the UK. One key event was the DEFRA Timber In Construction Roadmap 2025 Summit, which took place in March, to launch the refreshed Timber in Construction Roadmap - reflecting current UK Government objectives and policies.

The event was well attended from a whole cross section of the sector - public bodies, companies, academics, as well as policy makers. A series of upbeat talks had been paired to put forward the policy and the industry perspectives - leading to very interesting Q&A on each themed segment. Part way through the day we welcomed Mary Creagh - Minister for Nature, who addressed the room with a well-informed and passionate call to action.

For more info about the roadmap, follow this link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/timber-in-construction-roadmap-2025/timber-in-construction-roadmap-2025

In July it was Welsh Government's turn in the limelight - with the launch of Making Wood Work for Wales - the timber industry roadmap. This had been in consultation during the first half of the year, with input from a wide spread of sector bodies and companies from the forest right through to timber use and recycling. The resulting document was launched by Huw Irranca-Davies at the forestry day of the Royal Welsh Show. It sets an impressive agenda for building a thriving timber supply chain in Wales, including skills provision and consideration of future-proofing of the forest - building resilience for future climates as well as preparing the industry for ongoing development.



In September, Forest Research and Scottish Forestry published their Species shortlist for future commercial timber species for productive forestry. This was the culmination of a research project with various stakeholder consultations to identify tree species to boost resilience to pests and diseases and prepare for anticipated changes in climate. In the light of these challenges it was seen as essential to identify a shortlist of alternative species that the whole sector can agree upon, to diversify the composition of Scottish woodlands and forests. A similar exercise has been underway in England and recently begun in Wales.

Commissioned by Scottish Forestry, Forest Research worked with Edinburgh Napier University to develop the list of species. The work drew on a review of many publications and studies relating to UK grown timbers, species trials and other sources to inform the discussions. The shortlist contains 28 tree species, 14 are conifers and the other 14 broadleaves. You can find out more here: https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/selecting-a-shortlist-of-tree-species-for-diversification-and-resilience/

Roundup from other conferences:

Women in Timber conference inspires 120 delegates!

The first ever Women in Timber Conference was a resounding success, as Laura Keily of the WTG leadership team reports.

The event brought together 120 women from across the timber supply chain for a day of inspiration, networking and empowerment. Held at Oulton Hall in Leeds on Friday 5 September, and hosted by Timber Development UK (TDUK), the event marked a milestone moment for all the women working in what has traditionally been a male-dominated industry. The conference created a welcoming space where women could meet, network and share stories. It was also a chance to celebrate the incredible achievements of those women in the industry while encouraging even more to join this thriving, sustainable sector.

The day combined powerful keynote speeches and panel discussions with opportunities for one-to-one conversations.

- **Putting People First** – Christella Golby of the Timber Trades Benevolent Society (TTBS), highlighted the charity's vital work and partnerships supporting those in the timber trade. Christella shared the charity's long history and explained its wide-ranging support, from quarterly grants to helping with essential costs such as funeral expenses and utility bills.
- **Owning Your Professional Brand –** Judy Parsons (LinkedIn Trainer) showed how small profile changes can transform visibility and influence. Judy brought energy and humour to her interactive session on using LinkedIn as a personal branding platform rather than a static CV. The session left attendees inspired with practical skills to raise their profile in the industry.
- **Global Perspectives –** Michelle Buckland, Chief Commercial Officer for Miro Forestry, shared insights from operations in Ghana and Sierra Leone, highlighting sustainability and women's participation. She reflected on how far the UK has come in creating opportunities for women in timber, particularly when compared with other parts of the world. Michelle's advice to those at the start of their careers was clear: "Ask questions, involve yourself in every part of the business, and don't accept the ceiling – you are your own worst enemy if you do that. Bring your perspective, because that's what makes the industry move forward."
- **Resilience in Action –** Claire Toomey, Head of Sustainability and ESG Lead at Howdens Joinery, delivered an inspiring session on her journey from studying food science to the timber sector. Claire's talk covered the challenges of balancing career development with family life, and how resilience became a central theme of her career. Claire also championed timber as a

vital renewable material in the fight against climate change, explaining that a deep understanding of forestry and sourcing is essential to creating meaningful ESG strategies.

- **Seizing Opportunities –** Camilla Fish, Managing Director of SCA Products UK, gave a fascinating look at leadership development and succession planning in the timber industry. Her timber industry journey began with an unusual job posting: the chance to join SCA in a fast-track programme with the potential to become Managing Director – no timber experience required. Camilla spoke about the importance of businesses investing in structured succession planning to prepare future leaders. She credited SCA's willingness to take a chance on her potential, rather than her existing experience, as a key factor in her success. Her story reinforced the theme that opportunities can often come when you least expect them – and should be seized boldly.
- **Confidence Through Connection –** Rosie Wise, Managing Director of Benchmarx Kitchen & Joinery, offered insights into building confidence and credibility in the workplace. She reflected on how curiosity and a willingness to learn have helped her carve out a rewarding career in timber, proving that success doesn't require a traditional path. Rosie also highlighted the importance of mentorship and peer support, noting how women in leadership roles can help those starting out feel seen and supported.
- **Panel Q&A** – Chaired by Chidi Adilih-Osim, Group Sales Manager for TTJ, this interactive session with our speakers from the day drew strong audience engagement and thought-provoking questions.

Laura Qualters, TDUK Membership Development Manager, said: "Women in Timber started as a simple idea: to create a space where women in our industry could connect, learn and feel seen. The energy in that room was amazing."

Karen Sussex, TDUK's Head of Operations, said: "This conference wasn't just an event – it's the start of a movement. Seeing so many women come together to support one another and openly share experiences was incredibly powerful. We're proud of the positive energy this day created and can't wait to build on it."

The event was organised by the Women in Timber Committee, which comprised TDUK's Karen Sussex and Laura Qualters, Jessica Vernon from Timber Garden Buildings, Chidi Adilih-Osim from Timber Trades Journal, and Sian Moreton from BSW Timber. It was sponsored by NWTTA, TTJ, CDS Consultants, BSW Timber, Timber Garden Buildings, James Jones & Sons, H&B Group, NETTA, Södra Wood, Stag Softwood, Taylor Maxwell, Kullick Gill & Robinson, Jewson, NMBS, Metsä Wood and Kronospan.

The day was also about making a difference. Thanks to the generosity of attendees and sponsors, a lively charity raffle raised over £1,700 for the TTBS (Timber Trade Benevolent Society) and Women In Timber also donated an additional £1,000 to support their amazing work in our sector.

Laura concludes: "This is just the beginning. Our focus now is to build on this momentum and grow the Women in Timber community, providing ongoing support, and planning the next event to ensure this platform continues to inspire and empower."

IRG Conference 2025 in Japan

Dennis Jones of the WTG leadership team reports from his trip to the IRG conference in Yokohama.

Since its inception in 1969, the International Research Group on Wood Protection (originally the International Research Group on Wood Preservation) has held annual meetings at various locations around the globe. This year, saw IRG56 being held in Yokohama, Japan – the third time Japan has hosted this annual conference.

In total, 184 delegates attended from 28 countries, with 130 papers and posters presented across the 4 days. Special sessions were held on The Circular Economy (chaired by Bostjan Lesar, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Novel Treatment Technologies (chaired by Dennis Jones, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden).

Each year, IRG awards several young researchers with funding to attend the conference, and this year allowed 11 persons to attend and present. To promote scientific excellence, three awards are presented annually: The Awards were the Gareth Williams Award (GWA) for best presentation, sponsored by Arxada, the Rich Ziobro Award (RZA) for best poster, sponsored by Koppers, and the Viance Innovation Award (VA) for most innovative paper, sponsored by Viance.

The 2025 Awardees at IRG56 were:

GWA - Daniel Freitas Lima - Brazil, Univ. of Minho, Portugal

RZA - Haruka Murai - Japan, Tokyo Univ. of Ag. & Technology

VA - Kenneth Cheng - Canada, Univ. of British Columbia.

The conference encourages the interaction between senior researchers and the next generation, as was evident by discussions in coffee breaks, evening meals and the Wednesday afternoon excursion.

IRG56 also saw the end of the term of Presidency for Rod Stirling (FP Innovations, Canada), the position now being taken by Miha Humar (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia).

IRG57 will be held in Beijing, China on May 24-28, 2026. More details about this conference can be found on the dedicated website (https://www.irg-wp.com/IRG57/index.html).



Ron Cockcroft Award recipients


IRG delegates on Wednesday excursion

What's coming up soon?

If you have received this newsletter then you will have the WTG selected as your technical community (or one of your technical communities) in your IOM3 membership login. This will mean you also receive direct emails from the IOM3 events team about upcoming webinars or activities that feature or relate to wood. A lot of the other technical communities and interest groups interact with the WTG, for example sustainable materials, construction materials, packaging and natural materials. I do hope you will take advantage of these opportunities to interact in the IOM3 community in the wider sense.

On our website you will notice there is an events segment part way down the page featuring WTG and related activities. https://www.iom3.org/group/wood-technology-society.html