

# See you at Fensterbau

## ...VEKA opts for German show

**VEKA plc has revealed that it will be taking its own stand at Fensterbau, the leading industry exhibition for the first time.**

Sales & Marketing Director Colin Torley said the decision was taken in the absence of Glassex as an exhibition in its own right.

“We believe that Fensterbau will now be the best opportunity for us to reach UK and international based companies. The show has always attracted many UK visitors; in the circumstances, there will undoubtedly be many more.”

VEKA plc is taking a stand separate to – but neighbouring – VEKA AG’s massive 902sq.m presence at the biennial show, at Nuremberg on March 24-27, next year. It will focus entirely on UK products, including the new Vertical Slider and Fully Reversible windows and the Amulet composite door.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for us” Colin added, “It is one of the many benefits of being part of the global VEKA group that

we are able to co-operate with VEKA AG in this way. The scale of the Fensterbau show is immense and we believe that much of the 2010 audience will be people who would previously have gone to Glassex - we encourage customers to book early to go to the show to avoid disappointment.

The VEKA stand at Fensterbau will be a superb opportunity to see some of the very latest product innovations being launched and also to remind VEKA customers of the power and scale of the VEKA brand, a powerful message which they can in turn use, to sell our market leading products onto their own customers.”



# Network goes for sales leads with dedicated website

**Network VEKA has launched a dedicated lead generation website to collate prospects’ details for distribution directly to members.**

Consumers are driven to the site, [www.yourperfecthome.co.uk](http://www.yourperfecthome.co.uk) by a variety of methods including search engine optimisation, pay-per-click links and adverts in lifestyle magazines and newspapers.

It is an important factor to create a dedicated system for Network VEKA

as some third party providers may sell the leads many times over and they may not all be specific to our product range.

With this system, any leads generated by Network VEKA will be kept in-house and passed solely to the nearest participating member.

The initiative was launched officially at the AGM but had been successfully trialled for a number of weeks before that.



**Network VEKA**  
reliable in the extreme



# Group Chairman pledges long-term plan for UK

Andreas Hartleif, Chairman of the worldwide VEKA Group, has reiterated the Group's long-term commitment to the UK and even pointed to new opportunities to be found in the current difficult market.



Andreas Hartleif

Speaking in interviews with The Glazine TV and at the Network VEKA AGM, he not only refuted rumours of any UK pull-out but added that the Group hopes to gain market share here by winning the confidence of other long-term orientated companies.

**"VEKA will stay in the UK with a local organisation and production," he said.**

"Some of our competitors may even think about pulling out of the UK because of a lack of perspective or simply not enough financial substance and power. In the last decade our industry was very interesting for financial investors and quite often the target for huge investments. The value of these investments is decreasing and the interest of these investors may disappear.

The opportunity exists for the committed companies once the financial situation improves. We want to be one of those companies."

The Chairman also joined the call for the UK Government to do more for the industry during the economic crisis:

"It is essential that these measures are realised effectively and quickly. I think programmes for renovation of public buildings would help a lot.

Another effective point could be a decrease in VAT for energy-saving home improvements. That could bring both an economic and ecological benefit for society."

Speaking at the Network VEKA AGM, he restated the company's global view and the role of the UK within it:

"Our position in the world market is about Number Two or Three. We would like to be Number One, of course, but that is not our target.

**We believe in the message 'act global; think local.'**

All of our markets are different and significant and we would like to play a role in specific markets that are relevant.

The UK has a strong background in technology and a strong financial position. We don't want to get out of a market that has strategic relevance for us and the UK is one of those markets."

The interviews can be seen on:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1HOi4o6FQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1HOi4o6FQ)  
[www.networkveka.co.uk/trade/video.htm](http://www.networkveka.co.uk/trade/video.htm)

# Irish trio heads up Network VEKA's record nine recruits



Karen Lund

**Network VEKA has broken its own record with nine new members accepted at a single Steering Group meeting.**

The intake, including three more in the Irish Republic, narrowly beats the previous record of eight in one meeting, which was set at the end of 2007.

Membership Development Executive Karen Lund says more and more in the industry are getting the message.

"They are realising that having the backing of Network VEKA is even more important in a difficult market than in the good times," she said.

"They can see the benefits of professional marketing support, an insurance-backed guarantee package and a collective brand identity – including the celebrity endorsement of Steve Davis – and they know they can only get these from Network VEKA.

They are also noticing a very clear trend that consumers are putting much more emphasis on the security of a national trade organisation as a big factor in choosing an installation company."

She added that the three in Ireland – installers in Dublin, Co Monaghan and Co Offaly – were a bonus because the organisation's presence in the Republic is still being developed. The UK newcomers are five installers and one fabricator.

Anyone interested in joining Network VEKA can contact Karen on 07801 640625.

## Stop Press:

As The View was going to press, a successive Steering Group meeting approved a further five new members.

# 20,000 cheer Pete's charity ride

**VEKA Senior Technical Support Technician Pete Chapman cycled nearly 700 miles in seven days, in the sixth annual Burnley FC charity event from Bordeaux in Southern France back to Burnley.**



Pete was one of 19 raising money for Leukaemia Research as well as Burnley FC Youth Development. He raised nearly £1,000 of a group total expected to be over £20,000.

All in all, they had 21 punctures, three new front wheels, seven new inner

tubes, one new back cassette and three minor accidents.

They were welcomed back in style with a lap of honour around Burnley FC's Turf Moor ground, earning a standing ovation from the 20,000-strong crowd waiting for the afternoon's match.

Pete said "It was hard work, but we still managed to enjoy ourselves. It helped keep up the momentum because we were helping such worthy causes and were getting lots of messages of encouragement from home."

# Gemini's rescue mission highlights VEKA's support

When Oldham-based VEKA fabricator Gemini UPVC was called on to rescue a social housing and retirement home project from disaster, it was able to complete the sizeable refurb at full spec in just six weeks without a problem – to the undoubted relief of the Equity Housing Association.

The contract for 53 houses as well as the 120-window extra-care elderly facility in Stockport had seen just three new windows put in place when the original supplier ceased trading. The fact that Gemini was able to step into the breach was much to its credit but was also due to the support provided by VEKA, with its wealth of experience in the commercial sector. VEKA is well known for its role in some of the UK's biggest and most prestigious social housing projects in partnership with fabricator customers. The VEKA brand is synonymous with product superiority and customer support, meaning that many of its small and medium fabricators are just as well placed to make the most of the current resurgence in social housing as larger customers.

Michael Griffiths, MD of Gemini commented: "Five years ago we wanted to take on more commercial work and chose VEKA as the system we knew was the most highly specified." The decision proved to be a sound one, especially in the recent climate and Gemini has seen social and commercial work nearly double to 30% of its 300-plus w/w output in the last six months alone. Gemini is also a Network VEKA member and even though the Network is purely domestic in its focus, Michael says the logo speaks volumes about the company's



integrity and so always appears beside the company's other accreditations on all its commercial material.

Many fabricators around the UK have recently been tempted to pitch for social contracts, and who can blame them. Whilst the domestic market is still trying to limp out of free-fall in the wake of the credit crunch, many local authorities and their ALMO partners are still very active, encouraged by a national Government keen to keep workers working. The sector may have its rewards but, as VEKA Commercial Manager Alistair Craig explained, it also makes a few demands that newcomers may need help with:

**"In order to compete in the commercial sector it is vital to have the right spec of product but of course that is only the beginning.**

Any contract will need technical back-up such as site audits, CAD design and guidance on legislation and

contractual detail. It is also essential to have in-depth knowledge and experience of supply chain management, from dealing with the client to delivery on site, and tracing the route to market via specifiers, architects, housing associations and local government. Now, more than ever, you must have the right environmental credentials for your product – including recycling policies – and be able to express them clearly. VEKA understand that many of these may be unfamiliar to the smaller fabricator, even those with some commercial experience, and so comprehensive support is available – a great benefit nowadays when commercial work is an increasingly important part of the mix for many companies."

Alistair Craig concluded: "As far as the commercial specifier is concerned, VEKA and its products fulfil all their requirements and so it is only natural that we would want to support our customers in making the most of opportunities in this flourishing sector." **Gemini UPVC, 0161 626 6366**

## TV watches as VEKA cheers on the Clarets



Fans take a photocall

Even the TV cameras came to watch when soccer-mad VEKA and Network VEKA workers dressed the part to cheer their home team on their way to the Premiership. Production was shut down at the Burnley factory for a day to let workers watch the Clarets beat Sheffield Utd 1:0 in the Championship Play-off Final.

When dozens of them celebrated with a themed dress-down day the previous Friday, both regional TV channels, not to mention the two radio stations and the regional newspaper, turned out to share the occasion.

BBC Radio Lancashire even came back to the factory the day after the match to interview elated fans from the extrusion lines. MD Dave Jones said of the day's shut-down: "This was Burnley's biggest day in living memory so, as one of the town's major employers, we wanted to make sure all of the workforce had the chance to be a part of it."

You can even view their moment of TV glory via the VEKA website, at [www.vekauk.com/burnley.php](http://www.vekauk.com/burnley.php)

## FR and VS go from strength to strength

**Demand for VEKA's new Fully Reversible and Vertical Slider windows continues to grow as more and more fabricators and specifiers discover their benefits over other styles and brands.**

Both systems were part of a collection of new products unveiled at Glassex '08 along with the highly-acclaimed Amulet composite door.

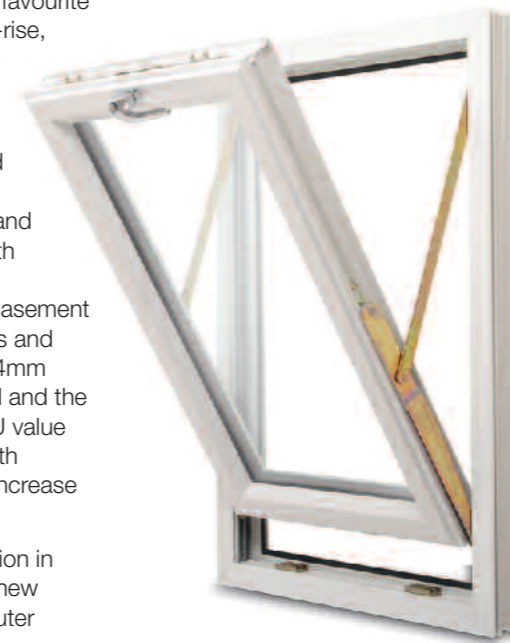
The Fully Reversible is not only a favourite in social housing, especially high-rise, but also the most popular choice in domestic retrofit in Scotland, even on the ground floor.

VEKA's system is five-chambered with five PVC profiles and three steels. It uses standard gaskets and ancillaries that are compatible with other VEKA profiles and can be manufactured into combination casement and tilt & turn frames for windows and doors. All glazing options from 24mm to 44mm can be accommodated and the window has already achieved a U value of 1.4 and a BFRC 'B' Rating, with further development planned to increase this rating.

Vertical Sliders are the ideal solution in many heritage applications. The new VEKA VS has a multi-chamber outer

frame and a three-chamber sash, which provides improved weatherability and energy ratings. In fact, the VS can already achieve the BFRC 'B' Rating but work is almost completed to enable it to go for an 'A.'

The VS can be made using existing add-ons and can accommodate 28mm glazing.



## Over half are ordering online



**Did you know that around 60% of VEKA customers now make the most of the easy-to-use online ordering facility? Launched in 2008, it offers customers the chance to create and track orders online, removing the risk of human error that paper-based systems can cause.**

Customers log in to a secure area, then can choose to buy profile by the metre, length or full stillage and a bespoke favourites list helps them to select their most frequently purchased items at a glance. All orders are stored for customers to check back historically on amounts bought and when placing a new order; prices are calculated with discounts built in, so it is clear to see exactly what the cost will be before ordering.

Colin Torley, Sales & Marketing Director, commented: "For many of our customers, it seems that online ordering is the way forward – allowing them to order in such a way that they can instantly get a price, place the order themselves and then track the progress online at their convenience. Not only does it remove the chance for human error, but also it provides customers with a useful reference point for past orders.

Of course, for those who prefer the personal touch, the Customer Services team are on hand to take orders via the telephone and to assist with any queries on price etc, but we would encourage customers to give the online system a go and see how it works for their business."

Although the system has been designed to be as user friendly as possible, full training is available.

**To enquire about setting up an online account, please contact Dan Fallows on 01282 725343.**

## More fabs sign up

**More and more fabricators in Britain and Ireland are learning the benefits of working the VEKA way.**

Recently, no fewer than seven have moved over to VEKA systems with many others planned in the next two months.

Matrix 70 remains the most popular choice of system, followed by the fully-sculptured Matrix FS, Matrix 58 and the new Vertical Slider and Amulet composite door.

VEKA Sales & Marketing Director Colin Torley said: "It is always great news that new fabricators are coming on board and it is just as significant, at the other end of the scale, that we have such a strong group of long-standing customers."

**The newcomers are:**

**National Window Systems of Stoke, Staffs, Matrix FS**

**Elite Windows (Burton) Ltd, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs, Matrix 70**

**Lissett Homes, York, Matrix 70**

**Moonforge t/a Mr Windows, Neath, Swansea, Matrix 70**

**Goldseal Trade Frames, Dublin, Matrix 58**

**New Opening Solutions, Pontefract, Yorkshire, Vertical Slider**

**Webster's Windows Ltd, Sherburn in Elmet, Matrix 70, Matrix FS**



## "Even if we gave you the profile, you'd still lose money!"

The pursuit of profit in the maturing market of the window industry is no longer as easy as it was, as Chris Ball, director of MBA Associates, explains

The plaintive cry of the systems company chief exec when asked for yet another concession from a customer is not as ridiculous as it seems. Many companies focus on buying as the only way to increase their bottom line and return to the halcyon days when you could be an idiot and still make money in the window industry. Those days are gone and there is every indication that they will not be coming back.

A maturing market and increasingly demanding customers ensure that if you are to make money you must be efficient and flexible.

Fundamental principles apply whether your business is fabrication, installation or a mix. Buying cost effectively (not just cheaply, remember the total cost of supply includes the quality costs) is important but only as a part of a company wide strategy, not in isolation. It is worthwhile studying the whole operation to ensure that all your operations 'add value' to what you do and thinking strategically about how to generate profit – after all that's what you run your business for (isn't it?).

**'Buying cost-effectively is important but only as part of a company wide strategy, not in isolation.'**

Think about some of the main areas :-

**COST** – do you really know what your costs are? Most people will answer that of course they do but this is fundamental. Do you annualise the costs? Order books don't stay full 52 weeks of the year, staff holiday and sick costs need to be factored in etc etc. Do you truly account for the remake and rework element? Do you monitor the waste? Do you record, monitor and measure your effectiveness? If not how do your staff judge their own performance and how do you know if they add value?

**PRICES** – do they reflect the cost? Do you know what your margins are? We have seen so many companies that have replaced higher margin products (windows, say) with lower ones (conservatories, say) and lost money on higher turnover. Do you price intelligently 'pinching' margin where you can? If you manufacture retail windows then a 2.5% price increase could be better than a 7.5% price reduction on all your fabrication cost...more if you are Everest! Do the maths.

**VOLUME** – not in itself an answer to low profitability but often seen as the panacea. More volume = more margin = more profit?

...not always! More volume = more resource required and if the margin is not right then selling more could increase losses. The first principle to apply if trying to extract yourself from a hole is – stop digging.

**EFFICIENCY** – productivity improvements tend to be thought of in terms of cost savings, this significantly undervalues them. If you make/fit a product in 1 hour instead of two then the benefit is more than the cost of the hour saved. The product that earned say £50 an hour now earns £100 an hour but the hour saved can now be 'sold' at anything down to material and labour cost as your overhead has already been paid.

**This enables marginal costing to work and will let you compete in new and price sensitive markets.**

A good example of this is Wal-Mart, low price but definitely not low profit. Similarly the cost of rework is not the cost of the product being remade but also the earnings of the product you did not make/fit whilst the rework went on.

The relative importance of these points will vary with individual cases, and the issues

in your own business will be similar but not identical to your competitors. Some strategic thinking, followed by action, will pay dividends. Rarely is there a situation where some profit improvement is not possible and the answer need not be (and probably isn't) volume or buying price.

'Productivity improvements tend to be thought of in terms of cost savings, this significantly undervalues them..'

### Cash is King

...True, you will be able to lose money for ever so long as you have cash in the bank unfortunately if you do not earn it you will have to introduce it and borrowing it is less easy than it was! (A simple business lesson governments would be well to heed!)

*Chris Ball is a Director of MBA and a member of the Institute of Business Consulting [www.ibconsulting.org.uk](http://www.ibconsulting.org.uk), MBA Associates Ltd is a specialist consultancy that partners clients to Recruit, Retain and Develop Top Performing Teams. Using sophisticated and proven methods that are different to the usual recruitment agency MBA has an enviable track record of Job Matching with currently over 80% of candidates recruited are retained after one year (statistics from Harvard Business review show 14% success rate is average on CV alone!) MBA can be contacted on 01242 821 432, [info@mba-associates.co.uk](mailto:info@mba-associates.co.uk) or through the website at [www.mba-associates.co.uk](http://www.mba-associates.co.uk)*

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## Want to know more?

If you are not already a VEKA customer or Network VEKA member but would like to know more about what these organisations could do for your business, why not give them a call, e-mail or visit the websites:

**VEKA**  
Emma Crawford, 01282 716611  
[salesenquiry@veka.com](mailto:salesenquiry@veka.com)  
[www.vekauk.com](http://www.vekauk.com)

**Network VEKA**  
Karen Lund, 01282 473172  
(mobile 07801 640625)  
[klund@networkveka.com](mailto:klund@networkveka.com)  
[www.networkveka.com](http://www.networkveka.com)

# NEW APPOINTMENTS



## Louise joins Customer Services team

Meet Louise Trippier, the latest addition to VEKA's Customer Service team.

Louise leaves one prestige brand for another, coming from Mercedes Benz, and brings a whole host of experience in all areas of customer service and order processing. Her new role at VEKA involves inputting customer orders into the SOP system which are then processed within VEKA's state-of-the-art warehousing facility before being dispatched to customers.

"I've been at VEKA for several weeks now and I am enjoying learning about the great products and dealing with customers old and new," she said, "It's great to work for a company with such a strong reputation for customer service and I am looking forward to maintaining that reputation in my new role."

**Louise joins fellow Customer Service Operators Pat Walker and Mary Patrick as first points of contact for customers.**

You can contact them and the rest of the customer service team on:

(all phone codes 01282)

**Pat Parry (Customer Service & Sales Support Manager) 725288, mobile 07702 551263 [pparry@veka.com](mailto:pparry@veka.com)**

**Howard Riley, 725344, mobile 07764 412765, [hriley@veka.com](mailto:hriley@veka.com)**

**Pat Walker, 725347, [pwalker@veka.com](mailto:pwalker@veka.com)**

**Mary Patrick, 725345, [mpatrick@veka.com](mailto:mpatrick@veka.com)**

**Louise Trippier, 725346, [ltripplier@veka.com](mailto:ltripplier@veka.com)**

**Dan Fallows, 725343, [dfallows@veka.com](mailto:dfallows@veka.com)**

**Alistair Craig, one of the best-known names in the industry, with a 22-year track record, has joined VEKA as Commercial Manager.**

He has previously worked in a variety of roles for system suppliers and fabricators.

Alistair plans to work alongside the existing team to rebuild, regenerate and reinvent the commercial side of VEKA, which he believes makes up the core of the company's business.

He said of the role: "In the current economic climate, many companies are finding difficulties in securing profitable work within the commercial sector. VEKA, as a company needs to be in a position to support the customer base in making the most of every possible opportunity."



I'm keen to get involved with our fabricators; and having seen things from their point of view I am aware of their priorities and what they expect from a market-leading system company."

**VEKA has appointed Rebecca Mayhew as Brand Manager.**

**Previously a member of the Ultraframe marketing team, Rebecca will be responsible for maintaining and developing the VEKA brand through PR, online marketing, branding and customer support, ensuring that the high standards associated with the company are conveyed consistently across all channels.**

Rebecca said of her appointment: "I am extremely excited to be working in this role for a global company. Having been in the glass and glazing industry for some years I was well aware of VEKA's reputation for excellent products and customer service. To be part of the team responsible for maintaining this well-respected brand is a challenge which I relish."

I am a firm believer that marketing through tough times is the way to succeed during a downturn – couple this with a market-leading product range and I believe that VEKA customers are in the best possible position to maintain and grow their businesses, despite the well-documented credit crunch."



**David Barratt has joined VEKA plc as Technical Manager.**

David has spent several years working in the chemical and electronics industries and has a wealth of experience in project



management, product and process development, technical service and new product introductions.

He commented: "In the current climate, changes in legislation are looming for the window industry as energy efficiency becomes more and more important. Window development is becoming increasingly technical to meet ever more stringent environmental demands and it's exciting to be at the forefront of these technical advances with VEKA."

I have always been very impressed with the professionalism of the company and am looking forward to leading the excellent team here at VEKA, developing new 'Best in Class' products, processes and services."

# Sun shines on Stormseal's fun day

It was sun and fun all the way when more than 200 adults and children joined Stormseal Southwest in celebrating its recent success at its Plymouth showroom.

Network VEKA brand ambassador Steve Davis was there to take on challengers and play a few trick shots while guests enjoyed a barbecue, bouncy castle, face painting and a shooting range. Local radio station Heart FM provided more games as well as music.

Stormseal mixed business with pleasure offering a 15% discount for any orders placed on the day.

"The whole team was really pleased with the open day," said MD Paul Murphy.

"It was a pleasure to have Steve Davis visit us. Lots of people turned up and everyone had fun - which is exactly what we were hoping for."



# Network VEKA Steering Group

The Network VEKA Steering Group members are, as ever, a valuable first point of contact if you have a problem and a valuable resource of industry and technical knowledge.

They are also good listeners if you have anything you want to say about the way Network VEKA is run.

You can contact them at:

|                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Peter Blair</b>   | <b>02891 826868</b> |
| <b>Blair Neill</b>   |                     |
| <b>Eddie McGrath</b> | <b>01204 664477</b> |
| <b>Paramount</b>     |                     |
| <b>Charlie Berry</b> | <b>01294 211227</b> |
| <b>Andrew Wright</b> |                     |
| <b>Steve Hancox</b>  | <b>01543 466464</b> |
| <b>Goliath</b>       |                     |
| <b>Colin Torley</b>  | <b>01282 716611</b> |
| <b>VEKA</b>          |                     |
| <b>John Ogilvie</b>  | <b>01282 473170</b> |
| <b>Network VEKA</b>  |                     |

## ...and the staff

The Network VEKA staff, whether in the office or on the road, are there to help with everything to do with admin, guarantees, marketing, membership etc.

Just give them a call on: (All 01282)

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Susan</b>                 | <b>473177</b> |
| <b>(Office Manager)</b>      |               |
| <b>Amanda</b>                | <b>473179</b> |
| <b>Rukshana</b>              | <b>473176</b> |
| <b>Karen</b>                 | <b>473172</b> |
| <b>(Membership)</b>          |               |
| <b>(mobile 07801 640625)</b> |               |
| <b>Dave</b>                  | <b>473178</b> |
| <b>(Marketing)</b>           |               |

## VEKA marks 15 years as Investor in People



Gabriela, centre, and colleagues prepare to hoist the flag.

### VEKA is celebrating gaining the prestigious Investor in People accreditation for 15 years in a row.

The award not only makes the company one of the longest-standing in East Lancashire but also came with a glowing report for "a highly professional, customer-focussed team who are proud of VEKA and its products."

Human Resources Manager Gabriela Hammond said everyone at the company was delighted with the award. she added: "At VEKA, as for many companies, 2009 has been difficult, but our culture, people

development and the efforts of all the workforce have helped us to win through and continue building on our strong foundations for the future."

The report from the IIP assessor said the decision to continue to train and develop in the current climate was "to be applauded and highly commended" and added: "The employees' collective pride in the job, high skill levels and customer-focused approach transmits to anyone involved with the organisation."

VEKA has now held IIP since 1994 – only a year after the initiative was launched.