



THE BRITISH FURNITURE CONFEDERATION

The single voice of the furniture & bed industry

March 2009

## **Political Notebook**

### **A monthly activity report from the British Furniture Confederation**

#### **1. BFC Campaign Updates**

Support from Westminster for two of The British Furniture Confederation's current political campaigns continues to gather momentum. The credit insurance campaign now has 46 MPs who have noted the problems which have affected some BFC members after the unfair withdrawal of credit insurance; while the 'Ask If It Is Great British Furniture' campaign has 39 MPs from all parties who have publically acknowledged the contribution of the furniture industry to the UK economy.

For both campaigns, Madeleine Moon MP, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group (APFPG), tabled Early Day Motions. These provide MPs with a chance to put their support for an issue on record. It is important to obtain the support of as many MPs as possible. Although EDMs don't have any legislative power, they do demonstrate the strength of support for the industry, and force the Government to take notice of the sector's difficulties in testing times.

The BFC is continuing to encourage all companies in the furniture industry to ensure their local MPs have signed up to these Early Day Motions.

Madeleine Moon has also continued to fight for the better availability of credit insurance by tabling a question in the House on behalf of the BFC requesting the Government to "take steps to assist the furniture industry adjust to the withdrawal of credit insurance." However, the Government stalled, and in reply simply claimed to be "providing a range of support to industry, including the furniture sector to help companies during the current recession." This answer isn't good enough for the BFC, and it is continuing to pursue the issue.

## **2. Meeting with the European Commission**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> March, members of the BFC met with Sarah Lambert, the European Commission's Representative to the UK: Roger Mason (BFM), Peter Smith (BCFA) and Jessica Alexander (NBF) attended.

During the meeting the difficulties in accessing support from the UK's regional development agencies were explained, and how this stops the furniture industry accessing EU support. Sarah Lambert in return provided a full explanation of the way EU funding is forwarded to national governments, rather than directly from the EU to relevant industries, but acknowledged that this was a problem for certain sectors like the furniture industry. In addition she explained that the European Commission was working on developing an easily accessible online source of information so that UK businesses could find out what help was available, and what regulations may affect them in the future.

Ms Lambert also agreed to attend the next meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group, to give a more detailed explanation of the issues raised at the meeting, and also answer any further questions.

## **3. All Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group**

The All Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group met at Westminster on the 9<sup>th</sup> March. Its chair, Madeleine Moon MP was unable to attend due to Parliamentary business, but Paul Goodman, Conservative MP for Wycombe) took the chair in her place and presided over a very positive meeting, covering a wide range of topics affecting the industry, including EU structural funds, credit insurance, consumption tax, scambusters and the sourcing of school and Royal Mail furniture. Mr Goodman undertook to help the BFC with a face to face meeting with the Shadow treasury team to brief them about the industry and some of its issues.

## **4. 18<sup>th</sup> May – BFC Flammability Guidebook launch**

The BFC is about to publish its new report on flammability regulations. This guide will provide definitive advice on flammability for all types of materials and furniture. It updates and incorporates the latest guidance, and offers a comprehensive review of current UK legislation. The report will be launched at the Furniture Makers Hall (12 Austin Friars London EC2N 2HE) on the 18<sup>th</sup> May. The event will start at 1.30pm.

Further presentations follow the launch, explaining the activities of the BFC and its progress in parliamentary campaigning. Proskills will also give a short presentation on training in the furniture industry.

For further information about the launch, and a full listing of the day's events, please contact the BFC Secretary Dr Peter Beele at 01438 777700.

**ENDS**

#### Editors' Notes

The British Furniture Confederation (BFC) acts a single voice for UK furniture and bed manufacturers. Led by an executive, comprising representatives of BCFA, BFM, FIRA and NBF, and supported by associate members (AMUSF, GMB, Proskills and WCFM), its mission is to ensure that the UK furniture industry has a strong and sustainable dialogue with Government. Its roles include:

- Securing the long term future and prosperity of the British furniture industry
- Raising the profile of the industry at a political level
- Formulating strategies for dealing with key industry issues
- Engaging in dialogue and negotiating with Government on these issues
- Working with the All Party Parliamentary Furniture Group to promote cross party discussion and to meet with senior influencers within Government agencies
- Ensuring that the industry gains the recognition and attention that its size deserves

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EDM 500

**CREDIT INSURANCE AND THE FURNITURE  
MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY**

19.01.2009

**Moon, Madeleine**

46 signatures

Anderson, David	Austin, John	Battle, John
Bottomley, Peter	Burden, Richard	Caton, Martin
Corbyn, Jeremy	Crausby, David	Cryer, Ann
Dean, Janet	Devine, Jim	<i>Dismore, Andrew</i>
<i>Dobbin, Jim</i>	Dobson, Frank	<i>Doran, Frank</i>
Drew, David	Durkan, Mark	Etherington, Bill
Evans, Nigel	Francis, Hywel	Hancock, Mike
<i>Henderson, Doug</i>	<i>Hopkins, Kelvin</i>	Howells, Kim
Hoyle, Lindsay	Illsley, Eric	Jenkins, Brian
Jones, Lynne	McCartney, Ian	McDonnell, Alasdair
McDonnell, John	McGuire, Anne	Meale, Alan
Osborne, Sandra	Prentice, Gordon	Robinson, Iris
Roy, Lindsay	Simpson, Alan	Simpson, David
Singh, Marsha	Taylor, Dari	Taylor, David
Wareing, Robert N	Williams, Betty	Winterton, Nicholas

That this House acknowledges the importance of the furniture manufacturing industry to the UK economy, with an annual output of almost £10 billion and direct employment of around 124,000 people within 7,500 enterprises; further notes the problem of obtaining credit insurance in light of the economic downturn particularly in the furniture manufacturing industry; and recognises that credit insurance companies are promoting panic by removing insurance cover from furniture manufacturers and their suppliers, often without basing such action upon the risk involved or the financial viability of the individuals or firms involved.

**EDM 952**

**ASK IF IT IS GREAT BRITISH FURNITURE  
CAMPAIGN**

03.03.2009

**Moon, Madeleine**

39 signatures

Borrow, David S	<i>Browne, Jeremy</i>	Burgon, Colin
Campbell, Gregory	Campbell, Ronnie	Caton, Martin
Corbyn, Jeremy	Cryer, Ann	Dean, Janet
Dismore, Andrew	Dobbin, Jim	Dodds, Nigel
Drew, David	Foster, Michael Jabez	<i>Goodman, Paul</i>
Hancock, Mike	Hemming, John	Iddon, Brian
Jenkins, Brian	Jones, Lynne	Leech, John
Moffatt, Laura	Osborne, Sandra	Pope, Greg
<i>Prentice, Gordon</i>	Riordan, Linda	Robinson, Iris
Rowen, Paul	Simpson, Alan	<i>Spink, Bob</i>
<i>Taylor, David</i>	Vis, Rudi	Williams, Betty
Williams, Mark	Williams, Stephen	Willis, Phil
Wilshire, David	Winterton, Nicholas	

That this House acknowledges the importance of the furniture manufacturing industry to the UK economy, with an annual output of almost £10 billion and direct employment of around 124,000 people within 7,500 enterprises; notes the Ask If It Is Great British Furniture campaign, as featured on the BBC 2 programme, Working Lunch and in the national press; emphasises the qualities of British furniture which comes from craft skills which have been conceived, developed and perfected over many years, decades and centuries of tradition, producing inspirational designs, from the most traditional manufacturing methods, with the most stringent environmental and health and safety standards, the shortest delivery times and the best after-sales service; and further notes that the campaign is an important initiative that should be supported and applauded.