

Following its launch in September 2007 the Wood Window Alliance (WWA) has been forging ahead with its plans to highlight the thermal efficiency, durability and beauty of 21st-century wood windows, by targeting professional, trade and consumer audiences.

A real breakthrough for the wood window industry in the UK, the formation of the WWA marks the first time that so many companies have come together to create a powerful marketing campaign for wood windows in the UK, placing product quality, industry standards and sustainability at its core.

As well as 'starting a window revolution', members of the WWA share a common belief that the Government's call in the Housing Green Paper for a 'revolution in the way we build, design and power our homes' is a significant opportunity and something in which wood windows have a major role to play.

Not only are they beautiful, but wood windows have been shown to be energy efficient, long-lasting and easy and inexpensive to maintain and repair, making them a solid investment in today's eco-friendly world. Research conducted by MORI on behalf of the WWA found that one of the common misconceptions among consumers was that wood windows cannot be double glazed. However, technological advances have meant that double and even triple glazing is possible in wood windows, making them energy-efficient and cost-effective additions to any building.

Numerous environmental benefits of wood windows have recently been recognised in the new BRE Green Guide, published in June, in which wood windows received the highest overall summary rating of A and A+. Wood windows were also top of the class for climate change – achieving an A rating, compared with far lower ratings for all other materials. The Climate Change Indicator within the overall rating rates the net amount of climate change gases released into the atmosphere over the full life-cycle from the materials used within comparable building elements.

The information is set against the background of continuing incremental changes to Part L, detailed in the Code for Sustainable Homes, which will demand a decrease in a building's energy-in-use and make the CO₂ emissions from building materials an increasingly important aspect of a building's carbon footprint.

Wood windows also scored high marks in the life-cycle assessment (LCA) showing that, compared with other materials, wood windows have a minimal impact on the environment. That is due partly to the fact that wood windows have a long lifespan, with the BRE giving them a service life prediction of at least 35 years, and partly to the fact that they are made from wood, the world's only naturally renewable building material.

The future of the wood window industry is looking bright, with the WWA collaborating with DEFRA to ensure the sustainability, thermal efficiency and durability of 21st-century wood windows is recognised in future policy development. DEFRA is currently working on a road-mapping project which will allow the wood window industry to understand better the environmental impact of its products, taking into account all the stages – from the acquisition of the raw materials all the way through to the disposal of the product at the end of its life. The information will then inform work to mitigate the environmental impact of wood windows, and the WWA will be working closely with DEFRA and with its members to ensure that any issues raised by the road-mapping scheme are addressed.

Commenting on the recent resurgence in the wood window industry, Richard Lambert, chief executive of the British Woodworking Federation (BWF) which runs the WWA, said: "I am delighted that the BRE Green Guide has supported our view of 21st-century wood windows as the sustainable choice for eco-friendly consumers. We look forward to working with DEFRA to develop a comprehensive road map for wood windows and will be encouraging our members and the woodworking industry in general to consider their impact on the environment and identify ways in which this impact can be reduced.

"The woodworking industry has long been considered environmentally conscious and eco-friendly, mainly due to the fact that our raw material is the world's only naturally occurring building material. However, the industry needs to recognise that this alone is no longer enough to satisfy the ever-increasing environmental responsibilities of the woodworking industry. Work needs to be done to address the issues raised by the BRE Green Guide and this will be our focus in the coming months."