

## CASE STUDY: B&K STRUCTURES

### BACKGROUND

B & K Structures (B & K) design, supply and install a range of products including Glulam, cross laminated timber and structural insulated products. They are a wholly owned subsidiary of the Bowmer and Kirkland Group and have a turnover around £20 million. The company started as a steel fabrication business, however they recognised the potential of the timber market and developed a new business model. Engineered PEFC and FSC timber is now responsible for the majority of their turnover and sustainability is one of their key selling points.

B & K are based in Derby but are happy to work anywhere in the UK, islands, Ireland overseas. Their main client base include Kier, Willmott Dixon, Wates, BAM and Morgan Sindall however they are also well known and trusted by many of the top 20 contractors in the UK. B & K's director, Nick Milestone, is passionate about the sustainability agenda and due to the nature of their core product offering and their belief that sustainability sells, B & K have already made significant progress in this field. Paul Philbin, Quality and Environmental Manager, is the company's lead on sustainability and is responsible for the day to day running and managing of their quality, safety and environmental management systems, FSC and PEFC Chain of Custody accreditation, CRC responsibilities, COSHH, packaging waste and statistical analysis error and accident figures. Paul is also the lead contact regarding B & K's engagement in the School.



One of the biggest challenges faced by B & K regarding the sustainability agenda is competing in the cost versus sustainability debate and communicating the value of the sustainable option compared to the less sustainable alternative (which may cost less upfront). Paul also sees raising awareness of the sustainability agenda internally as an on-going challenge, and acknowledges that they have a long way to go before sustainability, other than in terms of product, is fully embedded throughout the company.

### INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

B & K first heard about the School from Kier, they received an invitation to go to the Supplier Day at Haydock Park in autumn 2012. Paul attended and was impressed by the number of main contractors represented as well as the range and number of attending suppliers. Recognising the potential business benefits, opportunity to learn, network and engage with some of their key clients, Paul then booked a place at three more supplier days in Birmingham, Nottingham and Leeds.

Paul explains, *"The Supplier days were a fantastic way to find out more about the latest sustainability issues in construction and the priorities of our clients. Seeing the commitment from the project partners was a great incentive to continue to commit time and resource to this agenda."*

### SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

Paul completed a self-assessment on behalf of B & K after the Haydock supplier day. He found the tool easy to use but struggled to hit the higher scores as non-product sustainability tends to be departmentalised. For example, employees had great awareness of FSC / PEFC chain of custody however when considering ISO 14001, knowledge beyond the certificate on the wall is less well distributed.

Following self-assessment, the 10 point action plan recommended attending a range of workshops and hand-outs. To date Paul and his colleagues have been to five free workshops – Carbon Footprinting, Responsible Sourcing, Selling Sustainability, BM TRADA Chain of Custody c/w the EUTR and Meeting Contractors' Ethical Business requirements. Most of these workshops were beneficial to B & K, however in hindsight Paul realises that a procurement colleague would have been best placed to attend the workshop on responsible sourcing, and a business development team member could have made the most of the Selling Sustainability session. In an effort to communicate all aspects of sustainability, Paul has revised the company induction to include global warming, ethical trading and even the Stern Report!

### IMPACT

As a result of engaging in the School, B & K Structures has:

- ✓ **Gained the knowledge and skills to conduct their own company carbon footprint** in the future, rather than paying an external consultant to do this on their behalf.
- ✓ **Started to look into the responsible sourcing standard BES 6001** and is currently considering certification.
- ✓ **Shared their progress through the School with both existing and potential clients** at face to face meetings, emails and through the pre-qualification process.

- ✓ **Developed a comprehensive sustainability induction for all new employees.** Paul has created this using a range of resources available through the School.
- ✓ **Begun to promote the School to their own supply chain**
- ✓ **A procurement team with a better understanding of sustainable procurement,** who are now equipped with the knowledge required to embed sustainability considerations at all stages of the procurement process.
- ✓ **Increased the sustainability knowledge of the business development team** – this is important to B & K as those client facing employees need to understand the issues that are faced by their customers.
- ✓ **Increased general awareness of sustainability throughout the business** and are confident that their average score on the self-assessment is steadily increasing.

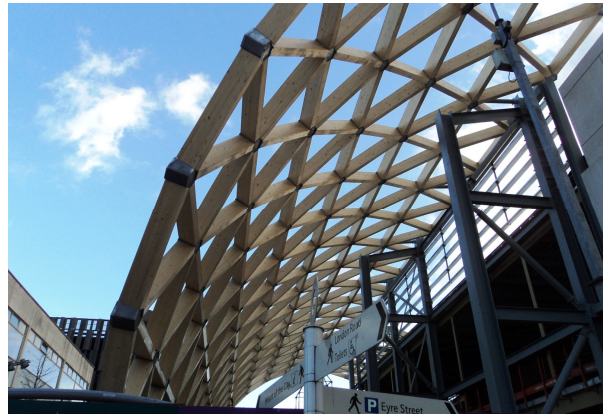
## BENEFITS

**Better placed to meet client requirements** – the School has provided key resources and support in areas of sustainability that had not previously been considered, for example B & K now understand more about the responsible sourcing standard BES6001 and is looking into certification options. Paul has noticed that responsible sourcing is becoming increasingly important and that a growing number of their clients are starting to ask questions about this.

**Improved chance of winning new business** – with sustainability featuring more and more prominently in the bidding process it is important to provide appropriate and tailored responses to sustainability related questions. Paul believes that their engagement in the School has been “a fantastic education” over the last 11 months and that they are now much more knowledgeable about a wide range of sustainability impacts and are consequently able to offer a higher quality response to such questions.

**Reduced reputational risk** – As B & K continue to consider the range of sustainability issues (outside of timber and basic environmental management) within their organisation and supply chain, they are in turn reducing the risk of being accused of unsustainable business practices which can have caused considerable reputational damage resulting in loss of work.

**A better informed client** – Should the School continue to grow and gain momentum with new suppliers and main contractors coming on board, Paul believes that the familiar debate of convincing clients that the sustainable option offers greater long term value will become easier.



## LESSONS LEARNED

**Conducting a carbon footprint for a company's operations is a fairly straightforward process** and companies should look into the possibility of conducting their own carbon footprints using the DEFRA conversion figures before committing budget to development by a third party.

**The self-assessment tool would be more effective if completed by each head of department rather than one tool being completed by an individual** – this would ensure that each part of the business is able to develop its own relevant Action Plan.

**It is important to consider who is best placed to benefit from attending the training workshops** rather than the same person attending all workshops with a view to then sharing the knowledge with appropriate colleagues.

## THE FUTURE

In order for B & K Structures to remain engaged in the School it is important to:

- ✓ Develop a way to recognise and reward those more active members.
- ✓ Continue to maintain the confidentiality of the School, and make sure that this is clearly communicated to all members.
- ✓ Continue to run a range of workshops and supplier days
- ✓ Continue to provide all resources for free
- ✓ Maintain the momentum of the School, ensuring that content is all up to date and of excellent quality.