Firm supplies bricks for college bricklaying contest

UK building products manufacturer Forterra donated thousands of bricks to Easton & Otley College in Otley, Suffolk, as part of a competition to find the best trainee construction talent in the country.

Bricklaying students took part in the SkillBuild 2018 Regional Heat at Easton & Otley College, using Forterra's London Bricks.

Budding bricklayers took part in the the largest multi-trade competition in the country, which covers 10 trade occupations in all including bricklaying, carpentry, plastering and roofing.

SkillBuild, which is run by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), has been running for 50 years. Regional heats of the competition have taken place around the UK, in which construction students compete to be crowned the SkillBuild winner in their chosen trade.

In total, Forterra has donated more than 35,000 of its London Bricks to colleges including London, Newcastle, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, Brighton, Leicester and York, for the regional heats.

Bricklaying students take part in the SkillBuild 2018 Regional Heat at Easton & Otley College, using Forterra's London Bricks
Picture: LUCY TAYLOR

As grass dies and conservatories sizzle, profits rise for some firms

JESSICA HILL
Jessica.Hill@archant.co.uk

Whilst the prolonged dry spell may have caused misery for those in the welly boots trade, it has sparked a sizzling sales boom for many Suffolk companies.

As sweltering temperatures melt the roads and parch the grass, they have also created furnace like temperatures in conservatories. That has benefited Colourchange UPVC, based at Rendlesham in Suffolk, who are the region's leading installers of insulated replacement roofs for conservatories.

Owner Daryl Collins claims that business enquiries have tripled with the recent hot spell.

"The excessive heat is not just impossible to sit in, it causes all sorts of problems and damage as temperatures in conservatories soar above 120 degrees," he explained.

Suppliers of air conditioning units are also benefitting from the recent heatwave, although for some, the demand has been too great. The chief executive of one such Suffolk company, who declined to be named, said: "We can't handle the calls. We are absolutely snowed under, it's taking more than three weeks for us to get to people whose air conditioning units have broken down. We're having to turn away local companies and that's not good for business."

Simon Cheale of Artificial Grass Solutions
Picture: SIMON CHEALE

As people look out over their distinctly yellow-looking lawns, increasing numbers of them appear to have decided to opt for green grass of the artificial kind instead.

Simon Cheale, of Artificial Grass Solutions Suffolk, says this company is already booked up until October. "We're struggling to keep pace," he admitted. "Enquiries have increased by 35% year on year this past month due to the long dry spell.

"Myself and my team are currently working 13 hour days to meet the demands of the increase in business."

Mr Cheale, whose company has been trading for the last four years, says he is seeing a constant rise in demand for artificial grass - "not only because of this long hot summer but also the long wet winters where normal grass becomes water logged and boggy." he explained.

"Hot climates including UAE, USA & South Africa have been using artificial grass for many years as they can appreciate the benefits in hotter climates."

The sun has also been shining on the local ice cream industry.

Suffolk Meadow Ice Cream, based in Halesworth, has sold almost 1000 more units over the last six weeks compared to 2017, representing an 11% like-for-like increase.

"We have noticed the biggest increase in sales of vanilla, Belgian chocolate and strawberry in the 120ml size pots," says the company's development manager Katherine Manning. But she adds: "I do wonder if in some areas sales have been lower due to the football and it actually being too hot for ice cream - I can't believe I'm saying that!"

business

Tourism

A special clean-up of Clacton town centre has been taking place this week ahead of the school summer holidays.

Tendring District Council staff have been working hard to pressure wash pavements, tackle weeds and have a general tidy up before the peak summer season begins. This is in addition to the regular schedule of cleaning by TDC, and has been funded by the Love Clacton partnership, made up of the council and tourism partners. Promotional banners are also being installed, while businesses are given Love Clacton stickers to display to create a unified feel to the town centre. Street entertainment will be put on over the summer too.

Billy Ball, owner of Clacton Pier, added it was important that businesses came together. "We, through Love Clacton, are keen to support this initiative. Visitors to Clacton Pier come through the town centre, so it is just as important to us that the whole town looks great," he said.

Renewables

ScottishPower Renewables has partnered with Cambridge-based Aveillant, part of the Thales Group, to test a pioneering new radar system that aims to safeguard the UK's world-leading offshore wind industry.

Rapid growth in offshore wind technology means that much larger wind turbines are set to be installed in the waters around the UK in the coming years. Now with 'next generation' offshore projects considering wind turbines with tip heights upwards of 250 metres, these projects could interfere with Ministry of Defence (MoD) radar coverage and civilian aviation radar. An extended range Aveillant radar will be tested in Northamptonshire within the next 9 months, then further tests on the east coast of England will be planned soon after. If successful, the technology could be applied to future offshore wind projects in the UK, with global export opportunities to other countries too.