

# SO, LET'S TALK FRAMES



**Company,  
product and  
people news!**

# Let's Talk Frames

## Let's end the year on a high

2023 has been challenging. We're all aware of the ongoing cost of living crisis and its effects on consumer demand. I haven't got a magic wand, but I have got a bit of advice that might help. Keep on promoting your business. Understand and sell your strengths. You never know where there's a possible order and even if you don't secure a deal, you'll have made a connection that may pay off when the economic climate brightens.

Yes, that's a long-term approach, but Lancs Trade is coming to the end of its 20th year in business, and we've successfully weathered all sorts of peaks and troughs by considering the bigger picture. People still want safe, secure and well-insulated homes and probably always will.

Delivering the products that make safe, secure and well-insulated homes has always been our priority, and I'm thrilled that that's been recognised by the judges of the G23 awards. We're a finalist, and we'd love to bag the trophy and end this anniversary year on a high.

I hope you, too, can end this year on a high. When times are tough, stay positive. That's how you see the good stuff that's waiting for you.

All the best,  
**Mark Rowland**

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Did you know?

# Ambitious plans for Bury



We're based outside Bury's town centre, but we're still intrigued by ambitious proposals for its regeneration. A few years ago, a new mixed-use development on The Rock left much of the existing retail space underutilised, a situation that's worsened as shopping habits continue to change. Looking forward, developers want to bring housing right into the centre, creating a vibrant locality where people live, work, shop and play. Exciting times.

The strategy to transform Bury town centre includes housing blocks close to The Rock to create 'a vibrant, mixed use town centre hub'.

A vision for a transformed Bury town centre by redeveloping the Mill Gate Shopping Centre and the surrounding 15 acres to include less retail and more housing has been put forward. Bury Council has published an update to its strategy for the town centre shopping complex after it acquired the centre and wider estate alongside joint venture partner Bruntwood in April 2022.

A 300-page 'draft strategic regeneration framework' will go before the public for their views if the authority's cabinet gives the go ahead next week. The council describe the proposals as having "the potential to deliver one of the North West's most ambitious regeneration projects".

The vision puts forward proposals to deliver 120 homes within its first development phase, with up to 700-800 over the entire masterplan period of 15 to 20 years. The council hopes the regenerated area will be suitable for modern retail while also catering for the leisure sector.

A previous council report described a move towards 'a future in urban areas where people travel less, buy locally, work and access local services in vital and liveable neighbourhoods'.

The document sets out the suitability of the town centre for housing. It states: "There is an opportunity for the Mill Gate to deliver new homes, optimising the use of brownfield land, to support the delivery of a vibrant, mixed use town centre hub."

"The opportunity supports the long term vitality of the town centre by increasing activity and footfall,

while responding to the needs of existing and future residents." The framework document claims that retail in the town centre takes up too much space. It says:

The current amount of retail floor space within the framework area is unsustainable due to the significant shift towards online shopping and new, less traditional, forms of retail and leisure. The area lacks a wider mix of uses and insufficient access to high quality, mixed tenure, multi-generational housing.

"This limited housing provision prevents the town centre from being a community of choice for those wanting to live in one of Greater Manchester's most vibrant town centres."



# Looks like we're well-placed

**G**lazing Blogger has been sounding out the industry, with social media polls asking where the best opportunities are in fenestration in 2024.

Data from X gave a bit more weight to PVCu. LinkedIn pollsters gave more votes to aluminium. The figures for timber were low, more likely reflecting the size of the market rather than its health. There was also a significant vote for a mix of all three materials. Interesting results, and it's good to know that our current aluminium and PVCu approach aligns very nicely with what the market wants.

## Here are the figures from X:



**32.7%**  
PVCU



**35.2%**  
ALUMINIUM



**1.9%**  
TIMBER

**30.2% MIX OF ALL THREE**

As we begin to look forward to the end of the year and some well-earned time off over the Christmas period, it is also time to start thinking ahead to 2024 and ponder where the best opportunities might lie for the fenestration sector.

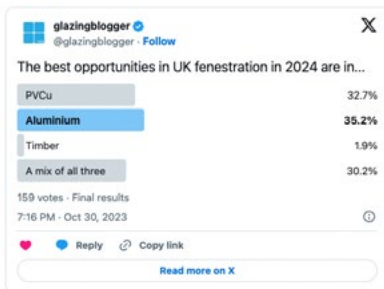
2023 has certainly been a challenging one in many aspects. The economy has taken a marked shift downwards. War has certainly been a big distraction and influence behind the inflation all of us have suffered from. A cost of living crisis combined with an energy crisis compiled the pressure on households.

But within the plethora of crises, and large businesses going bust, there have been opportunities. The obvious being in residential aluminium. There has been a noticeable flock to this part of the sector by both installers and fabricators seeking to take advantage of rising homeowner demand and a suite of products that are genuinely exciting to sell, install and view.

# Industry News

## DGB polls

Before I explore the opportunities for 2024 myself, I took to X and LinkedIn to ask followers where they thought the best opportunities were going to be in the coming year. The same question produced two different sets of results:



Source – Double Glazing Blogger, November 8th 2023

With X polls, you don't get to see who voted for which option. You can however on LinkedIn. And it was interesting to see just how many people from the world of PVCu voted to say that aluminium provided the best opportunities for 2024.

As you can see from the poll results, the split was a lot closer on the X poll than it was on LinkedIn. I would surmise that this is down to perhaps a slightly different make up of audience on that platform than on X.

Still, we can ascertain that a large portion of the sector sees a lot of potential in aluminium for 2024. That is a view that chimes with me strongly. In my own personal experience, we have found aluminium to be a very profitable stream of business at our own installations company. We have found that to be driven not only by ourselves promoting those products, but also by homeowners actively seeking them out. Indeed, we have sold more aluminium window and door products this year than in the last three or four years combined.

We have seen a lot of the market flock to aluminium this year, especially at installer and fabricator level, seeking to expand their product offering and increase revenue streams amidst a backdrop of deteriorating market conditions. Those that made the switch at the right time are likely to be seeing very positive results and hopefully a strengthening profit margin.

The fact of the matter is that aluminium provides a suite of products that fabricators, installers and homeowners can get excited about. Whether it's slimline patio sliders, aluminium steel-look internal doors, lantern roofs or bi-folding doors. These are products which homeowners are actively seeking out and willing to pay a good price for. I see this area only continuing to grow over the next 5-10 years, especially in the residential part of the market, and will begin to take chunks out of the market dominance of PVCu at the higher end of the market.

For me, 2024 is going to be a huge opportunity for the aluminium market and I would urge installers to really buy into the opportunities that it is already providing.

Ultimately, you are the creator of your own opportunities. Whether it is in PVCu, aluminium, timber, or a mix of all three, proactive companies will find that business remains good. Those who become stagnant, cut back on marketing activities and hope that things will just get better will find that 2024 could be a very difficult year. Especially with an election seemingly looming towards the back end of the year. Elections provide uncertainty and people tend to hold back more until they know what the outcome is going to be.

# Are your trickle vents big enough?

Earlier this year, the new Building Regulations Part F came into force. These are the Regs that cover ventilation and an important change has been made regarding passive or background methods of ventilation such as the use of trickle vents.

There's a lot of detail in the Regulations but in short, it's likely that to comply you will need larger trickle vents. You can read more about the changes here [Revised Building Regulations Part F: an end of transition](#) and you can find full details of the updated standards on the GOV.UK website.



# The new face of LTF distribution



Meet our new Dispatch Manager, Chris Bates. He's new to the fabrication industry but knows all there is to know about distribution. He's local too – living just up the road in Little Lever – so he's fully up to speed with the Northwest road network.

He also brings to the role twelve years' experience with Technical Textiles, a company that, like Lancs Trade, understands its customers' needs and is committed to serving them.

We asked Chris what he found attractive about the new role. He told us that he was excited by the opportunity to bring skills learned from serving a diverse customer base into a manufacturing setting. He said *"In distribution, you can often be the last link in a complex chain you know little about. But when you're working inside the*

*manufacturing operation, you see how you fit in and the difference you make."*

Chris is new to the world of fabrication, but not to manufacturing. He was employed in textiles for twelve years, and understands the importance of smooth, efficient processes. With an extensive range of products to deliver – safely and on time, to customers of all sizes, in all sectors – that understanding will be key.

Mark Rowland, our MD, is delighted to have secured Chris's expertise. He said, *"We're of a size now where we need proven strengths in key functions. When we have to seek those strengths outside the business, we look for the best fit possible. We believe we've found that in Chris and are very happy to have him on the team."*

# We're a G23 Awards finalist

Our MD, Mark Rowland, has probably already mentioned this, but to be fair, the whole team is proud that we're a finalist in one of the glazing industry's most prestigious awards. When you put the work in day in, day out – as we do – it's rewarding to see your efforts being recognised.

It would be fabulous to take home the trophy, but we are up against some worthy competition, but that's good news because it's evidence of high standards in the sector.

We are thrilled to announce our nomination as a finalist for "Fabricator of the Year" in the upcoming G23 Awards, a prestigious recognition event recognising excellence in the glass and glazing industry.

Mark Rowland, our MD is absolutely delighted. *"This nomination is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and innovation of our entire team. Moreover, we are proud to stand alongside other leading companies in our industry. We have our table booked and we look forward to meeting friends, old and new in November at the Awards ceremony."*



#### The finalists' categories are:

- Best Business Initiative of the Year
- Commercial Project of the Year
- Component Supplier of the Year
- Customer Care Initiative of the Year
- Fabricator of the Year
- Glass Company of the Year
- Installer of the Year
- Machinery Supplier Award
- New Product of the Year
- Promotional Campaign of the Year
- Rising Star Award
- Sustainability Initiative of the Year
- Unsung Hero Award

We also wish to extend our thanks to the judging panel for the awards this year; Andy Cassie, Brian Shillibeer, Brian Smith, Charissa King, Chris Beedel, Dave Borland, David Mechem, Douglas Masterson, Jon Vanstone, Kevin Jones, Luke Wood, Mick Clayton, Phil Heavey, Rod Appleyard and Steve May-Russell.

Now in their 19th year, the G23 Awards combine networking, celebration, recognition and entertainment and are the industry's premier awards event. The awards will take place on Friday 24 November 2023 at the London Hilton on Park Lane.



Product

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# The appeal of aluminium

Something has changed in the window and door market. Aluminium used to be a niche product, the go-to for a bi-folding door or a non-domestic installation, but there's growing awareness of aluminium's benefits amongst homeowners. We anticipated this trend several years ago and invested substantial sums in manufacturing equipment, recruited the specialists we'd need and sourced the best systems. Now we're fully able to meet the demand for a full range of windows and doors, delivering the slim sightlines and enduring quality that make aluminium glazing so desirable.





# Thank you



We really appreciate you giving us the opportunity to price your jobs.

**You can trust Lancashire Trade Frames to get the job done**