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Update on the Timber Door Fire Test Programme

We have been aware that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has organised and run a number of fire resistance tests of timber doors from several manufacturers over some months since last year.

ASDMA has not been consulted and involved in the programme as a responsible association for the specialist timber door sector. But some members have been asked to provide doors for test and have seen those doors tested.

We understand from reported conversations with MHCLG staff at fire tests that the test programme is now either finished or close to being concluded. We have asked for a formal report from the Ministry, but nothing so far has been received. We are not yet aware of a public advice note from MHCLG.

However, we are led to believe that at least 25 full tests have been concluded. And that all the results have been successful in meeting the test standard pass/fail requirements, (i.e. 30 minutes, integrity).

The tests included testing in both opening orientations, i.e. both in towards the furnace and outwards.

We understand that the established practice - determined by test data over many years of carrying out one test to demonstrate fire resistance performance, with the door leaf opening into the furnace as the relatively more onerous orientation – has been again confirmed and validated.

As far as we are so aware, the test programme has completely validated the test protocols observed and followed by the specialist timber door sector in testing fire doors for fire resistance in accordance with standard BS 476 Part 22, further endorsed on the pan-European level by standard BS EN 1634.

- BS 476 Part 22 allows testing in one orientation when a more onerous condition can be defined. BS EN 1634 states that the direction to be tested to cover the alternative orientation for hinged timber doors is with the door leaf opening into the furnace. That's because of shrinkage in fire away from the fire-resistant edge seal.
- ASDMA provided a summary note on 28 August 2018, that was also sent to MHCLG, fully explaining the test protocol and the reasons for it based on accumulated test data from routine test experience and original research by the sector. That note included a summary of recent sector test results for both opening in and out orientations to demonstrate and reinforce the established protocol.
- In Note 17 MHCLG confirms its view that BS EN 1634 provides the best available advice; and that testing in the weaker orientation is appropriate to provide evidence for performance from both sides.
- The proviso for plastic-based composite doors to be tested from both sides still applies.
(NB: Timber doors are not identified as composite doors, which are an entirely different door type.)

ASDMA wishes to affirm for Building Control that the protocol of using test results from a single test orientation, with the door leaf opening into the test furnace, is a confirmed and validated protocol which is well-established based on accumulated and shared test experiences, endorsed by the test authorities and confirmed by the sector.