

To the editor of Which? Magazine

**RE: Article entitled "Investigation: Double Glazing"**

**24 April 2012**

In the May edition of *Which? Magazine* you published an article entitled 'Investigation: Double-glazing' in which you looked into the service and quality of double-glazing companies.

The article, however, provides the glaring omission of timber windows as an option for replacement windows. It is a myth that the sole material used in double-glazing replacement is PVC-U. This has expanded the belief that plastic windows are the consumer's only solution, a solution that we believe to be an unattractive and less sustainable alternative to timber windows. This myth is an assumption we believe your magazine should not subscribe to, nor promote to your readers.

While PVC-U windows have a larger share of the market compared with timber, it is important that we offer the consumer choice in the material used and educate them on the benefits of other materials besides plastic. Indeed, according to the Palmer report<sup>1</sup>, wood's value share of the housing window market rose from 15% to 22% in the period from 2002 to 2010, and PVC-U's dropped from 78% to 70%.

When replacement windows are such a major item of expense for the home-owner, it would be useful for your readers to know that today's high performance wood windows are greener, longer-lasting and better long-term value than PVC-U equivalents.

With green credentials in mind, it is important that we educate consumers of the 'green' option that timber windows can provide, particularly as the long awaited Green Deal initiative will provide a welcome drive to window replacement. And let us not forget that timber windows are available both double and triple-glazed. In fact, timber is the only raw material that replenishes itself, and our industry prides itself on its use of sustainable timber.

Your report outlines the high quality of product and service of SME companies operating in the market place, and we are confident that our SME members would be scored just as highly by your readers. But in contrast to your report, we would be just as confident that our larger members would score higher than their PVC-U competitors, as all our companies are focused on providing excellent service and long-lasting and high quality products.

We would welcome a follow up report in your magazine that challenges timber window double-glazing companies to the same criteria as this report and would be happy to work with you in any way we can to ensure your readers are in possession of all the facts on window replacement. If we can provide assistance by writing an article, submitting guidance, or any other appropriate assistance, please do get in contact.

Yours Faithfully,



**Roy Wakeman OBE**  
President

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.palmermarketresearch.co.uk/reports.html>

**British Woodworking Federation**

The BWF is the largest trade association representing joinery and woodworking companies in the UK and includes 320 timber window manufacturers. Our members are assessed to a strict code of conduct, assessing their business practices, customer service and a range of other criteria. We also operate the Timber Window Accreditation (TWA) Scheme which sets standards for timber window manufacture to ensure consistent and high quality manufacture and durability. This standard is also used as one of the bases for joining the Wood Window Alliance (WWA). For further information, visit [www.bwf.org.uk](http://www.bwf.org.uk) or contact Iain McIlwee, Chief Executive on 0844 209 2612 or [iain.mcilwee@bwf.org.uk](mailto:iain.mcilwee@bwf.org.uk)



*To the editor of Which? Magazine*

We read your article, 'Investigation: Double-glazing', in May's Which? with some dismay. In making the assumption that double-glazing is synonymous with PVC-U, it perpetuates an unhelpful myth that has contributed to the spread of unattractive and unsustainable PVC-U windows throughout the country.

It's true that PVC-U has a bigger share of the replacement window market than wood. But, according to the Palmer report, wood's value share of the housing window market rose from 15% to 22% in the period from 2002 to 2010, and PVC-U's dropped from 78% to 70%.

It is particularly important to challenge this myth in the run-up to the launch of the Green Deal, which may well lead to another burst of window replacement.

When replacement windows are such a major item of expense for the home-owner, it would be useful for your readers to know that today's high performance wood windows are greener, longer-lasting and better long-term value than PVC-U equivalents. And, of course, that they come double or triple-glazed.

Our website gives details of the research behind our claims – not least the reports by Imperial College London and Heriot Watt University that windows made to Wood Window Alliance standards have a minimum estimated service life of 60 years (in normal suburban conditions and without any special maintenance).

**Yours Faithfully,**

**Sean Parnaby**  
**Chairman of the Wood Window Alliance**

**What is the Wood Window Alliance?**

The Wood Window Alliance is a group of 17 manufacturers of high performance, factory-finished windows. All members have to meet strict quality, performance and sustainability criteria, with Chain of Custody and third-party certification.

*For more information*

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