



CONCRETE

ISSUE 30
MARCH 2023



EDITOR'S NOTE



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IS NOT WELCOME AT

GORDON HOOD

ARCHITECT AFTER WHOM GORDON HOOD ROAD WAS NAMED

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This is something of a milestone editor's note as it's the first coming to you from the cidb site in the Centurion central business district. Yes, the long-anticipated move to new premises finally took place in January, when we packed up 23 years' of work and memories and headed a few kilometres south. It didn't take the team long to settle in and resume the important business of registration and regulation.

It was an opportune time to take over a larger site, since our ranks are expanding rapidly in line with the requirements of the renewed organisational structure. Our staff complement grew from 145 at the end of the last financial year to its current 165, including a full house of executive posts. With the structure ultimately allowing for around 185 people in the 2022/2023 financial year, we still have a long way to go, but we are in the right place to do it, with eight storeys to occupy.

To ensure customer service continuity, registration and support services also moved across from SABS campus. Contractors can now enjoy a more convenient walk-in service, since the office is on the Gautrain route. Advice and guidance are available, as has always been the case, during business hours from Monday to Friday.

South Africa looks set for another eventful year, not least because of the continuing energy crisis and the build-up to

the 2024 election. Good news from our perspective is the prediction of a recovery in construction during 2023 after a particularly troublesome period. Even though construction accounts for only about 3% of gross domestic product, our CEO Bongani Dladla pointed out in an opinion piece penned at the end of last year, any uptick in activity is likely to benefit also manufacturing, retail and technology. With the prospect of the B.U.I.L.D Programme gaining greater industry buy-in, generating more funds for development and bringing the private sector into the regulatory fold, we have high hopes for the months to come.

All that remains is to wish you, all our stakeholders, a bumper 2023 that is prosperous not only in the traditional sense, but in all aspects of life.

And if you're in Centurion, please pay us a visit at No 1 Gordon Hood Road, which, for interest's sake, was named after a multitalented architect who made his name in construction, designing and building pubs, hotels and retail centres such as Fourways Mall and Menlyn Mall. Having halted a shopping centre project in Boksburg in 1988 when he was head of OK Bazaars, he stated emphatically: 'We are not going to have any store anywhere that any section of the population may feel it is not welcome at.'

EDITOR



AN 'AHA' MOMENT EVERY MORNING



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THIS ORGANISATION CAN LITERALLY SHAPE AND REFORM THE ENTIRE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY VALUE CHAIN AS THE CUSTODIAN OF BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR CONSTRUCTION GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

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BOITUMELO MOKGATLE

Boitumelo Mokgatle wakes up with Oprah every day. In fact, it's the formidable Ms Winfrey who gets our Board member fired up and raring to launch into another energy- and enthusiasm-packed day.

Every sunrise is accompanied by an 'aha' moment for Boitumelo, whose morning coffee would be bitter without an Oprah Daily inspiration to dip into. Sentiments such as 'Life isn't about what you have; it's about what you have to give' and 'Everything you do and say shows the world who you are' set the tone for the equally formidable Ms Mokgatle.

Boitumelo is equally upbeat about the huge opportunities she sees for the cidb and is more than ready to play her part in turning them into achievements. 'This organisation can literally shape and reform the entire construction industry value chain as the custodian of both private and public sector construction guidelines and requirements,' she insists.

Her enjoyment of her seat on the Board is as clear as her credentials are perfect for the job. An MBA with a dissertation on enterprise risk management followed a BCom in accounting. Proven skills in strategy development, project and change management, corporate compliance and corporate governance do not go amiss either.

Post-matric, Boitumelo wanted simply to go to university and study. Initially admitted into medical school because of her sterling maths and physics marks, she chose commerce instead for one pretty practical reason. 'I hate hospitals and everything to do with them. I was never going to be doctor material.'

Her MBA challenged her, but delivered ample reward that she counts as perhaps her greatest achievement. 'I was at the South African Revenue Service in 2012 while studying through the Gordon Institute of Business Science at the University of

Pretoria. It was the hardest time of my career but looking back, I am proudest of that era and of being offered my first board appointment as a result.'

Now, with more than a decade of serving on boards and committees, she is well versed in the woes of state-owned entities (SOEs) and knows how to help resolve them. 'Almost all SOEs face similar challenges, many involving finance and auditing, which are my forte,' she explains.

The Board is currently tackling one of the cidb's major challenges, namely its legislation. 'With the Minister, we are removing blockages from the CIDB Act that have hampered the organisation from fulfilling the potential we all know it has. We are also addressing inevitable internal issues with management's help and through quarterly reports to the Board and its committees.

'I'm thoroughly enjoying my contribution to a crucial institution that has the power to change the built landscape for the economic benefit of all citizens, especially the formerly disadvantaged.'

Although Boitumelo refers to her boys Risizi, 17, and Risima, 15, as 'the wind beneath my wings', she relishes her own company, having found that the answers to life's questions come during silent moments grabbed from otherwise hectic days. 'There is insight in stillness,' she maintains. 'I love just being me, resting and doing nothing in particular. It's like pressing a reset button.'

And resetting also extends to her food preferences. She describes herself as a vegan-in-training who hasn't yet fully mastered the art of plant-based eating. But it's only a matter of time, as the health benefits are obvious. As Oprah might well say – and in fact did: 'Follow your instincts. That's where true wisdom manifests itself.'



REBUILDING, RENEWING, REVITALISING



Premier Dube-Ncube took to the podium recently to deliver her maiden state of the province speech.

KwaZulu-Natal will be restored to its former glory soon if Premier Nomusa Dube-Ncube has anything to do with it. And, given her reported dedication to duty, that looks like a dead cert.

However, she has her work cut out for her as head of a province still suffering the aftershocks of the unrest upheaval of July 2021 and the devastating floods that followed in 2022.

She delivered her inaugural state of the province address on 24 February, a highly detailed account of activity across every economic, social and environmental sector. It left few doubting that this woman means business.

Progress on and coming plans for construction and infrastructure development featured prominently, with current and upcoming work looking set to give both the province's economy and cidb contractors a welcome boost. She promised decisive action and focused interventions against a backdrop of the stifled growth of recent years.

Work already well underway, the Premier noted, includes the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport's repair of flood-ravaged services and structures, through its reprioritised budget of R2.91 billion and a further R580 million advanced by national government.

The N2/N3 national road upgrade programme has also kicked off, with R50 million earmarked over eight years. The initiative is expected to create more than 15 000 construction jobs. Work will begin shortly on the R5.3 billion N2 EB Cloete Interchange.

The Conurbia integrated residential project in eThekweni Municipality has already completed more than 2 600 units of the planned 28 000 houses in phase one. Phase two started in June 2022.

The construction of 232 gap market units is imminent.



The Premier recently took to her trowel to test her construction skills.

Other signs of provincial renewal are to be found in the Ithala Development Finance Corporation's R146-million funding support to 293 small, medium and micro enterprises and cooperatives, creating almost 1 300 employment opportunities to end-December 2022 and its support for township projects such as a R40 million plywood manufacturing plant close to KwaNongoma, R100 million logistics hub in Estcourt, R25 million fuel depot in Mnambithi and R35 million roofing material manufacturing plant in eThekweni, which will provide a similar number of jobs.

Added to these is a gold mine in Pongola and an aluminium factory in Richards Bay, each valued at R80 million, and a R130 million roofing and refurbishment programme across the properties portfolio, creating 520 construction jobs.

Other themes emerging from the provincial address included Premier Dube-Ncube's championing of women's rights. As pioneer of the annual Women in Leadership Dialogue and the KwaZulu-Natal Smart Province programme, she also acknowledged the worth of the cidb's Empowerment and Recognition of Women in Construction awards through her attendance at last year's event. Now, she told the province, she is turning her hand to bridging the digital divide to ensure that women and girls drive and benefit from the digital economy.

As a mother, the Premier believes that we borrow the earth from young people and the future. Thus, environmental preservation weighs heavily on her mind. Among her focuses are continued biodiversity stewardship efforts and stepping up the war on poaching.

Also on the to-do list for the coming year are improving water and sanitation, curbing road carnage, sustaining skills and education initiatives, taking the cannabis industry to new highs, reigniting tourism and combatting the perennial pothole plague.

And she will do all this while completing her PhD and raising five-year-old twins.

As the African proverb goes: 'When a woman rules, streams run uphill'.



IF IT'S NOT GREEN, IT'LL SOON BE A HAS-BEEN



Green buildings are a hallmark of economically sound business decisions, thoughtful environmental decisions and smart human impact decisions. So says global environmental business leader Rick Fedrizzi. Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille would no doubt agree, as her department's green-building policy edges closer to showing the red light to any building to be rented by a government department or entity that does not pass a thorough green screen.

Going green is more than an environmental revolution – it makes sound business sense too, as, according to the Green Building Council of South Africa, buildings designed with sustainability in mind boast lower operating costs – including energy savings of between 25% and 50% – are more efficient and future-proof, and promote wellness, healing and productivity.

Major drawbacks of green buildings include high-quality, durable structures; reduction and recycling of construction waste, sound insulation and ventilation, and use of durable, recycled and sustainably harvested materials.

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure Green Building Policy states that green building incorporates design, construction and operational practices that significantly reduce or eliminate the negative impact of development on the environment and people.

South Africa is on the right track, with bizcommunity.com having noted that, as early as 2016, local green buildings accounted for almost half (41%) of building project activity compared to the global average of 24%.

The trend has been many decades in the making. Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring', released in 1962, is considered one of the first attempts to define sustainable development. Her profound words are well worth repeating: 'The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.'

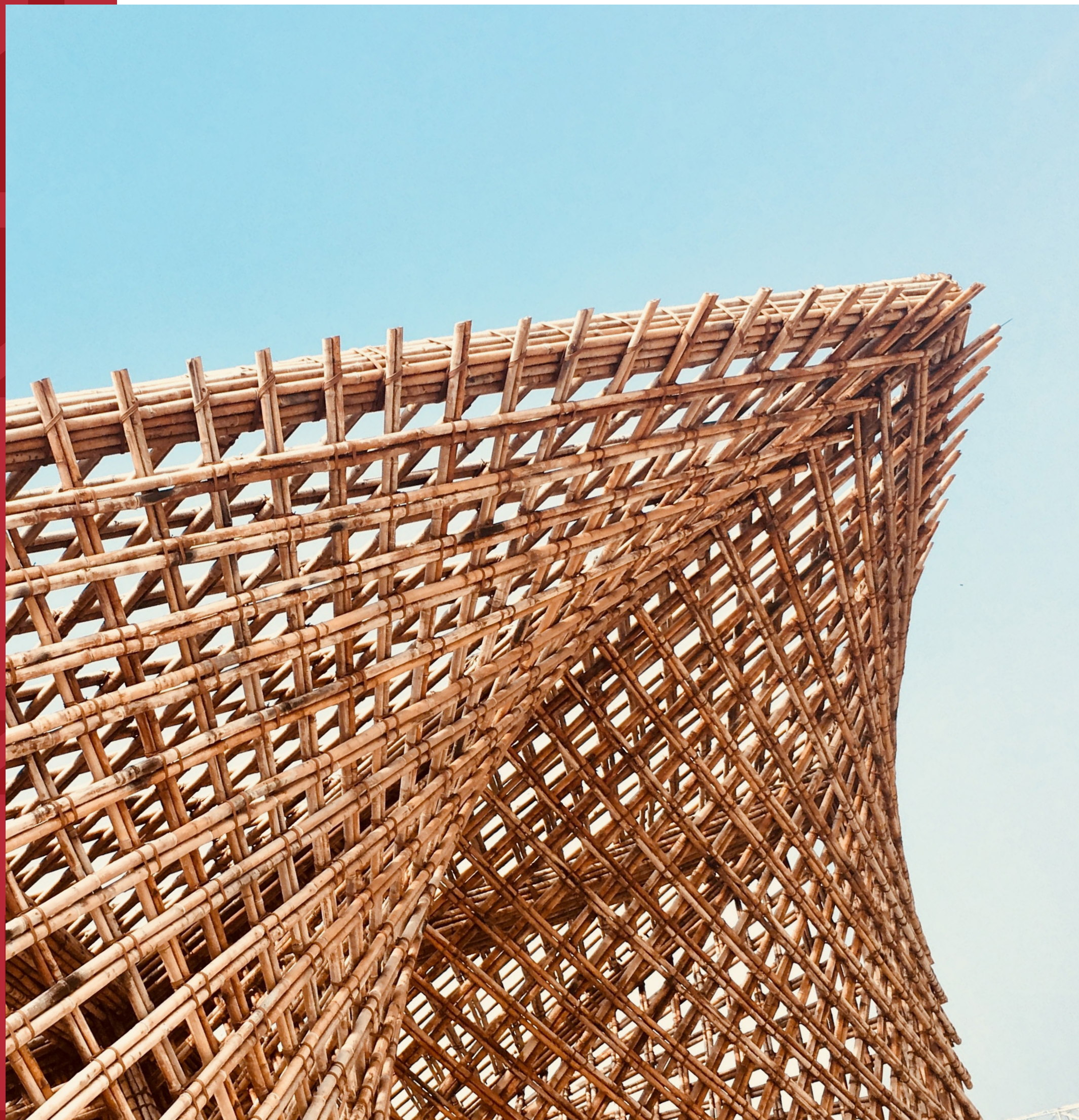
A recent media release by Business Partners Limited published on bizcommunity.com noted that green buildings could assist the country to reach its sustainability objectives while helping small businesses to mitigate the impact of loadshedding. It cited PricewaterhouseCoopers statistics that South Africa experienced 1 136 hours of loadshedding in 2021, costing the country's economy up to 400 000 potential jobs and a 2.7% loss in real gross domestic product growth (early in 2023, the accountancy firm stated that the economy could have grown by close to 7% in 2022 were it not for power outages). Announcing a multi-million rand incentive scheme for small and medium businesses to go green, the company pointed out that, although vital in energising the ailing economy, these smaller enterprises lack the resources to invest in alternative electricity supply.

The cidb, as a driving force in construction industry development, has its own carefully-crafted green-building standard in the pipeline.

cidb CEO Bongani Dladla points out that last year's global climate change conference – COP27 – reiterated that building and construction account for almost 40% of the world's energy-related carbon emissions. Almost a third of these are from building operations – lighting, heating and cooling, with another 10% embodied carbon released during construction.

As only 55% of these emissions can be tackled with renewables and energy efficiency, he stresses, the need is clear to produce construction materials differently or replace them with lower-carbon-footprint alternatives.

And this need for innovation, with the clamour for greener buildings and demand for retrofitting of older, non-compliant buildings could be part of the growth trigger for an industry desperately in need of a green shoot to emerge from the economic rubble.



SCANTLINGS

CRACKING THE WHIP PAYS OFF FOR SUPPLIERS

When circumstances demand it, make no mistake, Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Patricia de Lille doesn't hesitate to wield the big consequence management stick. And as most know, one of her greatest concerns has been late payment of contractors and suppliers because, as she has often said, payment is 'not a nice thing to do, but a non-negotiable duty'.

Her determination to bust the payment backlog that plagued the department before her arrival in 2019 has delivered deserved dividends for service providers. By 2021, she had reduced the weekly 2 000+ invoices beyond 30 days to between 27 to 40. But it still wasn't enough and she promptly scrapped the target of 80% of invoices paid on time for a far more ambitious objective.

Her dogged determination worked a charm because now the department is hovering at the 95% to 99% mark. Credit must also go to the revolutionary Reapatata system, which generates daily real-time integrated payment reports from all regions and leaves no place for tardiness to hide.

Presenting its progress to the Parliamentary Monitoring Group at the end of November 2022, the department reported that,

of the 74 602 invoices received from April to September 2022, 97% were paid within the deadline, a 7% improvement from the 90% of September 2021.

In an article published in Engineering News in August 2022, the Minister reiterated that payment of suppliers was among her priorities when she took office as she appreciated the need for enterprises, particularly smaller ones, to remain afloat, create jobs and contribute to the economy.

With her own house now firmly in order and pushing out a constant stream of prompt payments, there is little doubt that Minister de Lille will be keeping an eagle eye on the performance of the agencies under her wing. The cidb, fortunately, is already heading to its zenith and plans to achieve 100% on-time payments this year.

One thing seems certain – with the changing tide, the bad old days of June 2020, when the government had almost 28 000 overdue invoices valued at around R4 billion, are just that: Bad and old. And, if Ms de Lille has anything to do with it, gone forever.

Scantlings is a regular feature that brings you snippets of topical news.

Scantling: a piece of sawn timber, such as a rafter, with a small cross-section