**The flip side of busy**

Although construction work has been allowed to carry on throughout lockdown it does not mean that the sector has been unaffected by the pandemic.

Design and construction specialist Dan Grimshaw from Beam Development says appearances can be deceptive when it comes to the situation faced by smaller developers.

“You hear a lot of ‘you must be alright because construction is not affected’, but that’s simply not true,” said Dan, who develops high-end residential homes in London and the South West.

“We are lucky, because we've been allowed to carry on as many of our sites are external or there is space inside to allow people to work in a safe environment.

“However, we've got supply chain and cost-related issues; we have people off with COVID; and prices are going up dramatically for everything.

“Meanwhile, many eastern European workers have cashed in their self-employed allowance and returned to their home countries to sit it out.

“Everyone is just having to try to get through it. It’s not good, but on the flip side of that, everybody's busy which is a huge consolation”

Dan says he recently received notice from his builders’ merchants telling him that timber is going to go up in January, February, *and* March.

“Prices are increasing, and resources are becoming scarcer because supply chains are affected. Everything’s getting squeezed, and the situation was tight in the first place.

“People are keeping less stock. Where once you would expect to be able to get brassware in a week, I'm now looking at a month, so all the planning must change.”

Dan says the last quarter of 2020 saw shortages due to bulk orders from the big volume builders who were snapping up all the timber that they could get.

“Many smaller contractors don’t have the cash or the space to bulk-buy timber for the next six months. Bulk buying only exacerbates the problem so we would resist doing this.

“Before, we could pretty much expect to ring a builders’ merchant for a lorry load of timber, and it would probably be there the next day. We are now learning not to rely on or expect next-day delivery for everything.

“We're having to adapt our timescales now because the flexibility is just not there.”

**ENDS**

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