



## *NATIONAL FEDERATION OF GLAZIERS*

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### The Way Forward for FENSA

It is now over 2 years since Building Regulations were applied to this industry for replacement windows and doors. Over this time I have observed the efforts made by everyone at FENSA to make self-regulation work. The background to this whole effort has been the lack of full consultation, and the haste with which the Regulations were brought into play, despite pleadings to Government for a more generous and reasonable timescale. Let's hope that the same mistakes will not be repeated whenever Building Regulations are applied to Conservatories. Currently, the consultation is much wider and it appears careful consideration is being given to the even more complicated matters which relate to conservatories; so the signs are encouraging.

It no way reflects on FENSA that the current situation is unsatisfactory; that many thousands of installations are not conforming, and there is always room for improvement. The Federation has supported the self-regulatory scheme; it provides the industry with an opportunity to act with responsibility, not always the image depicted by some!

There are genuine concerns which need to be addressed. I believe they need to be to move FENSA forward with the best members of our industry, encouraging others to act properly and raising the profile of our business throughout the community.

The causes of concern identified are:

1. The incidence of non-compliance
2. The effectiveness of this entire effort
3. The ownership of FENSA
4. Consumer awareness

To deal with each of these:

1. It is still believed by many, with some justification, that there is an unlevel playing field. When this matter was brought up at the most recent Advisory Board Meeting, assurances were given that failures were being dealt with further inspections. This has involved some companies facing substantially more inspections. I am also encouraged to note that it is possible to report 'rogue' companies for investigation. However, we need to 'name and shame' persistent offenders. This magazine is an ideal tool for this; it has to be done sensibly, of course, with rules established and published to all participants in the FENSA scheme, and with reasonable provision for mistakes. Education, through seminars is being provided and insisted upon, by FENSA, and the time for excuses is coming to an end.

There is also clarification required regarding the time limit for prosecution (6 months for installer - 12 months for householder?). If these limits are correct, FENSA needs to push for change.

It is also clear that the balance between site and post installation inspections need to be changed. It is far too easy for someone to prepare themselves for a site inspection. It is noticeable that when BBA increased post inspections the failure rate also increased.

2. There are many installers and consumers who are not convinced that the additional cost of compliance is worth the effort and particularly whether anything significant is being gained. It would help the industry if some figures were produced indicating what has been achieved. Figures were estimated before the necessity of compliance, upon which this effort has been based. Why cannot current figures be produced? How much is this tax on windows and doors costing and for what National and Global benefit?
3. Recently the question of ownership of FEN SA was broached at the Advisory Board Meeting. I was rather surprised at the desire shown to retain ownership by the GGF. It is true that they funded the creation of FENSA, but this was because they alone were approached by the ODPM. I am not alone in this industry in expressing concern with the current situation. There are dual roles being played and the latest recruitment drive by the GGF is using the FENSA database. It was never the intention that FENSA should remain under the control of one Federation; it should be administered by the Industry under guidelines set down by ODPM. At the moment it is not self-regulation, but regulation under the auspices of the GGF. This is not satisfactory; no organisation should seek to benefit from this scheme. The way forward is for the entire industry to feel part of FENSA and to willingly support it as its own body. This will be the most effective way to deal with those who let us all down. The current situation needs to change urgently.
4. The Government pleaded poverty when we approached them for funding to publicise the introduction of Building Regulation compliance, so it was left to the reputable members of the industry to do this.  
I think it is fair to say that we have done as much as we can to address this issue. It is, however, still not clear in the eyes of many consumers that FENSA is not a federation, and I believe efforts should be made to make this clear. But how? Perhaps a standard letter of introduction, which would set this out, and which would be a compulsory requirement for anyone who is registered at FENSA to present to every potential customer stating clearly and simply what FENSA is. In addition the FENSA Yellow Page advertisements need to show this information so that it is clearly readable, not in very small type as it is currently displayed.

A Federation naturally looks after the interest of its members and it is also available for the Government to refer to for advice, and for consumers, to provide guidance and assistance in finding suitable tradesmen. Every organisation needs a vision; FENSA is different. It has a unique place in this industry and the path forward involves the acceptance into the hearts and minds of the industry. As a unifying force it has the opportunity to bring harmony and sense of purpose to our industry. To achieve this it needs to be independent of any other organisation, fair and responsible in its actions and to resolve to look after interests the community which, through the ODPM, created it.