

WPMA Members' Update – November 2020

Dear Members,

The WPMA Board met this month, and this meeting was followed by WPMA's Annual General Meeting. I want to update you on discussions and outcomes from both meetings.

WPMA AGM 2020

Firstly, important news from the AGM in terms of governance structure. Mr Brian Stanley was re-confirmed as Chair for the 2020-2021 Financial Year. In addition, WPMA Director, Mr John Eastwood (Head of Marketing and Business Development at XLam), was confirmed as Deputy-Chair. Deputy-Chair is a key position in the Association as this indicates the path to succession as Chair. Congratulations to both. They will now be working closely through what Brian described to the Board as a period of transition.

Secondly, the WPMA Annual Report describing activities over an extraordinary year together with an audited set of accounts was approved by the AGM. Copies of the Annual Report will be sent to all members over the next week and will also be available on the WPMA website.

The AGM saw an excellent turnout of WPMA members and I would like to thank those who were able to attend for the support shown to the Board and Association.

WPMA Board Meeting

The WPMA Board Meeting covered the range of topics where WPMA members are actively focused at present. The Board acknowledged that WPMA already has good working relations with Labour Party Ministers Stuart Nash (Economic Development and Forestry) and Damian O'Connor (Trade) and looked to creating closer links with Ministers David Clark (Commerce) and Poto Williams (Construction). Meetings between the Chair, Vice-Chair and Ministers will now be set up early in 2021 to progress WPMA's policy agenda.

The Board was updated on the policy work that we know to be underway by government agencies. This includes the setting of regulation under the Forests Amendment Act, revision of the Overseas Investment Act, MBIE's initial work on Building for Climate Change, revision of the NZ Sustainable Forest Management Standard, MPI's plan to put an official Wood Legality Assurance Scheme in place and their support of a National Wood Design Centre.

The Board expressed concerns that, driven by the need to respond to covid-19, market protection measures are accelerating around the world and these act as major trade barriers to NZ manufacturers. In this respect, the Board was keen to see the Industry Transformation Plans (ITP) for both Advanced Manufacturing and for Forestry/Wood Processing moving faster to explore and implement wider policies to support wood manufacturing. The Board heard that at an ITP meeting on 30 October MPI announced that it had already agreed to fund work on "optimal log supply contracts" and also "pre-competitive development of export markets".

MPI/MFAT intends to set to work on an "analysis of policy options for increase international competitiveness", but this is yet to start. The WPMA Board agreed to give this work a boost by commissioning a report analysing the actions

that our competitor countries are taking to support their manufacturing sectors. The report will then be provided to ministers in mid-December against a backdrop of countries taking major steps to protect their wood industries.

Two pieces of legal action were covered on the agenda. The first of these relates to the risk of industry-wide shut down under escalating levels of Covid-19. The Board is seeking to avoid this should the pandemic surge in NZ by writing a revision to regulation under the Covid-19 Public Health Response Act (2020) that recognises the pan-industry safety protocols that were developed by the forest and wood industry under lockdown early this year. Automatic recognition under the Act of the efficacy of the safety protocols is envisaged to avoid the application of the blunt policy instrument that allowed closure of all those industries deemed 'non-essential'.

The other piece of legal work is looking at the mechanisms by which WorkSafe is intended to operate. WPMA members want to better understand how WorkSafe researches and sets industry standards, how it is required to consult on standards and if there is possibility for this process to be more interactive between the agency and industry.

WPMA's work on Standards is broad. For the WPMA Board meeting the focus was on the planned revision of NZS 3604:2011 Timber-framed Buildings. This Standard is being revised and will take a slightly different direction to the one envisaged by the Standards NZ (SNZ) Scoping Group. In particular, the standard will be split into two parts based on the complexity of the design instructions:

1. NZS 3604.1 – *Timber-framed buildings – Framing and foundations*
Part 1 will set out the relatively easy-to-follow instructions that designers follow to select framing components such as floor joists, studs, rafters etc.
2. NZS 3604.2 – *Timber-framed buildings – Bracing systems*
Part 2 will set out the instructions that are used to select the bracing elements needed to resist wind and ground motion during an earthquake and to decide where those elements need to be located within the building.

The chosen split will present both different and difficult challenges to the Standards Development Committee (SDC). The most compelling reason for this split is to provide an independent compliance path for engineers (using Part 2) when architectural designers choose to contract out the design of the bracing systems.

WPMA is looking to nominate Jane Cuming (WPMA Technical Manager) to the SDC.

SNZ will be setting up working groups within the SDC to complete most of the technical related tasks and to draft, or supervise the drafting of, relevant wording to include in specific parts of the standard.

SNZ will be inviting technical experts to submit their interest in participating on working groups (below). **If you are interested in participating on one or more of the working groups listed below then please let Jane know Jane@wpma.org.nz and register on this website (<https://www.research.net/r/SNZEol>).**

- "Terraced buildings" – Addition of interconnected structures of up to three storeys
- "Foundations" – Foundation designs for use on expansive soils or liquefaction-prone soils
- "Bracing Demand" – Creation of a new Part 2 (seismic design actions and method) and updating Part 1 (wind design actions)
- "Bracing Elements" – Existing elements, isolated internal masonry walls, and steel elements for wide openings
- "Framing" – Framing around internal stairwells and support details for long span beams or lintels
- "Thermal Performance" – Facilitating better thermal performance
- "Structure and usability" – The document structure and its usability
- "Oversight" – Overseeing the linkages between groups, document sections, and other acceptable solutions

The Board noted the significance and legal gravity of the issues being addressed by the WPMA and that they are business-critical right across the NZ wood industry. This means that our actions are subsequently fully benefitting non-members at the expense of paying members. These include: COVID-19 recovery, competition/trade policy, overseas investment policy, NZ Building Code, H&S policy, biosecurity, certification, wood-based design, energy markets etc. For this reason, they urged that operational costs be recovered from non-members wishing to participate in the Association's initiatives in future.

WPMA will be renewing its website in November. The existing setup has become too cumbersome to manage and so we are moving to a much simpler set-up. This will enable us to use the site more effectively as a platform for important information, recent documents, relevant links and as a direct connection through to the WPMA's Wood Design Guides.

Finally, and by no means least, longstanding WPMA Director Owen Griffiths announced his retirement from industry. The Chair acknowledged that this would be his last WPMA Board meeting. He thanked Mr Griffiths for his enormous contribution to the WPMA Board, for his mentoring and vast industry knowledge that Owen has provided. Mr Griffiths was also a past winner of the NZ Wood Warrior Award. Mr Griffiths said he was grateful to WPMA for allowing him to participate in the operation of an organization that has proven to be a most effective voice in advocating for the advance of timber processing in NZ. He offered special thanks to the Chair for the professional way he has led our organization thus far. The WPMA Board and Executive wishes Owen all the very best for his retirement.

Jon Tanner
November 2020