

to timber

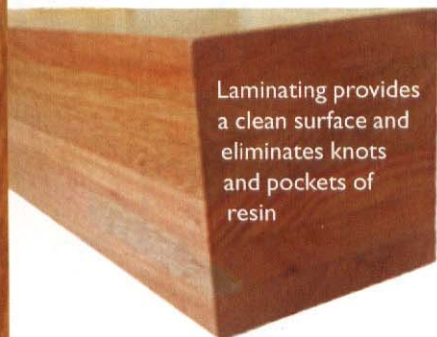
diameter logs, which means more of the tree can be used cost-effectively. Adding to its eco-credentials, Holz Schiller also highlights that most of its timber is sourced from woodland accredited under the PEFC environmental certification scheme.

In Germany, window makers latched on to laminated wood fairly early and are now estimated to use it for 95% of production. Market penetration in the UK is nothing like this yet, but Mr Kullik sees it increasing rapidly.

"We initially targeted the UK five years ago, but the market just wasn't ready and we found the products impossible to sell," he admitted.

"Now that is changing dramatically. We really only started our latest sales effort 10 months ago, but our initial customers who were taking trial loads are now taking monthly shipments."

Perhaps the key attraction for UK window makers of the product so far, he maintained, is the reduction they bring in remedial and repair work. "We noticed that UK manufacturers tend to have quite a lot of manpower dedicated to repair sections in the production line dealing with faults resulting from problems with the raw material," he said. "The laminated



Laminating provides a clean surface and eliminates knots and pockets of resin



timber virtually eliminates this work."

According to K&R's UK agent Lawrence Webster, the window industry's move to factory-finishing has further increased the appeal of using laminated timber. "Because they are making a higher value-added finished window, the raw material is less of a cost component and they are willing to invest in a better product," he said.

Holz Schiller has also geared its products to the specific requirements of the UK market. "In Germany the climate is less humid so we kiln the material to 8-10% moisture content," said Mr Kullik. "But in the UK, because of the generally wetter weather, we are supplying products at 12-14% moisture content."

Holz Schiller and K&R are also working closely with individual customers to meet their specific profile dimension requirements. "We do make a standard range of dimensions, which obviously bring cost and efficiency benefits," said Mr Kullik. "But we also have the flexibility to produce to the customers' own specification."

While appreciating this bespoke service as they get used to the product, Mr Webster thinks that at least some UK producers will eventually also opt for the standard range. "It is still a learning curve for them, but already customers are adapting their specification as they find out what a high yield product laminated timber is, with some already opting for 2mm to plane, for instance,

instead of their traditional 5mm."

As in Holz Schiller's other markets, Mr Webster also sees its laminated components appealing to all types and size of producer. "Because K&R works with a consortium of sawmills in addition to Holz Schiller, it has a very efficient, flexible logistics operation and can handle orders down to one or two packs," he said. "We can deliver to the UK from the mill in as little as two days, with the K&R tracking system enabling customers to keep a precise check on the progress of their order."

But even as the UK gets acclimatised to laminated components, Holz Schiller is looking at the next development to increase the options in the timber window market. In fact its latest product is set for launch in Germany in the coming months, before rolling out to export markets. This is a range of profiled window sections with externally exposed surfaces coated in decorative Renolit uPVC foil.

Exhaustively tested by the Rosenheim window technology institute, the new product is being billed as "maintenance free" – the ultimate weapon in the wood window makers' battle to recover market share from the uPVC and aluminium competition. ■

Enquiry numbers

Holz Schiller	212
Kullik & Rullmann	213
JELD-WEN UK Ltd	214

