

ANNUAL REPORT

An overview of the work of the
British Furniture Association



2024

2nd Edition



WELCOME TO OUR ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Page 3

Foreword

Page 4

Our name change

Page 5

Our vision, mission and values

Our objectives

Page 6

How we deliver our objectives

Our performance

Page 7

Develop the membership offer to improve value for members, recruitment and retention

Page 8

Maximise marketing and communication to amplify the BFA brand

Page 9

Enhance our relationships with external partners to support education, training and ESG initiatives

Page 10

Continuously evaluate and improve systems, processes and data management

Building our community

Page 11

The highlights

Page 13

Insights for BFA members

BFA Annual Report 2024

Foreword

Welcome to our first annual report

We represent a thriving industry and we are proud to be the voice of the sector in the UK.

We are an important industry for the UK, with figures for 2023 putting total consumer expenditure on furniture, textile floorcoverings and furnishing in excess of £28.7 billion.

Total manufacturing turnover for the sector in 2023 was £9.6 billion, deriving from c.9,000 companies employing 94,000 individuals.

The wider sector, including retail, is comprised of over 33,000 companies, contributing over £41 billion to the UK economy.

Furniture exports in 2023 reached £3.49 billion, an 11% increase from 2022. Imports dropped 13% to £11.96 billion. China accounts for almost a third (£3.85 billion), with Italy (£972 million), Poland (£878 million) and Germany (£839 million) following.

The Association has a passionate team, with a strong and robust governance structure to ensure we can deliver a wide range of meaningful services, benefits and support for our members.



Run by members, for members and the wider industry, we represent businesses across every part of the UK, operating in a broad sector, including upholstery, cabinet, bathroom, kitchen, and office furniture, together with mattresses and beds.

It's been a pleasure to produce this report and share details of some of the landmark developments undertaken and set out the Association's bold and ambitious plans for the future.

We look forward to exciting times ahead and to continue being the voice of a diverse, exciting and vibrant industry.

Phil Spademan

Managing Director

Our name change

The emergence of the BFA



New Name Same Values

The transition to British Furniture Association from the British Furniture Manufacturers marks the start of a response to feedback and engagement with industry that began in March 2024.

The BFM was founded in 1947 and since its formation, the industry has changed substantially. The number of manufacturers has declined and consequently manufacturing membership of BFM is now much smaller than it once was.

Businesses in the industry are now much broader with vertical integration blurring the lines of traditional business models. Retailers have moved into manufacturing; manufacturers have moved into retail and in some instances, manufacturers have acquired downstream suppliers.

The membership of the BFM as an organisation had already changed to reflect the broader needs of the industry.

The long established 'Associate' category has grown substantially, and the industry and organisation has seen the benefits of bringing suppliers and manufacturers closer together.

The more recently launched 'Retail' category is also expected to continue to grow.

Membership of our organisation will provide increasing opportunities for networking and business development between manufacturers and existing and new customers in retail.

Furthermore, the Board recognises that certain information, such as material price data, is sensitive to manufacturers and it is our intention to tailor the information available to the different categories of membership.

As an organisation there are many benefits of scale. A key part of BFA objectives include lobbying government. The bigger our scale - the more companies and types of companies we represent.

There are also purchasing benefits through representing a bigger membership group, and while BFA is a not-for-profit organisation, like many businesses, growth is required to maximise effectiveness.

Increasing membership numbers and turnover will also enable the organisation to develop the benefits and services that we offer, as well as spreading fixed costs across a wider membership.

So, in response to the changes the industry has seen in recent years, and the opportunities we face ahead, we are well prepared to support our members in their business journey for the future.

Nick Garratt
Chair of the BFA



Our vision, mission and values

The BFA Mission

To support British furniture manufacturers, suppliers, and retailers by fostering collaboration, liaising with Government, and promoting a thriving, sustainable industry.

Our Vision

For the British furniture industry to be recognised globally for its contribution to the UK economy, sustainability, exceptional quality and innovation.

Our Values

Integrity
Collaboration
Sustainability
Creativity



Our objectives

At the BFA, we always place our members at the forefront of everything we do...

Objective 1

Increase membership numbers and simplify the membership categories



Objective 2

Develop the membership offer to improve value for members, recruitment and retention



Objective 3

Maximise marketing and communication to amplify the BFA brand



Objective 4

Enhance our relationships with external partners to support education, training and ESG initiatives

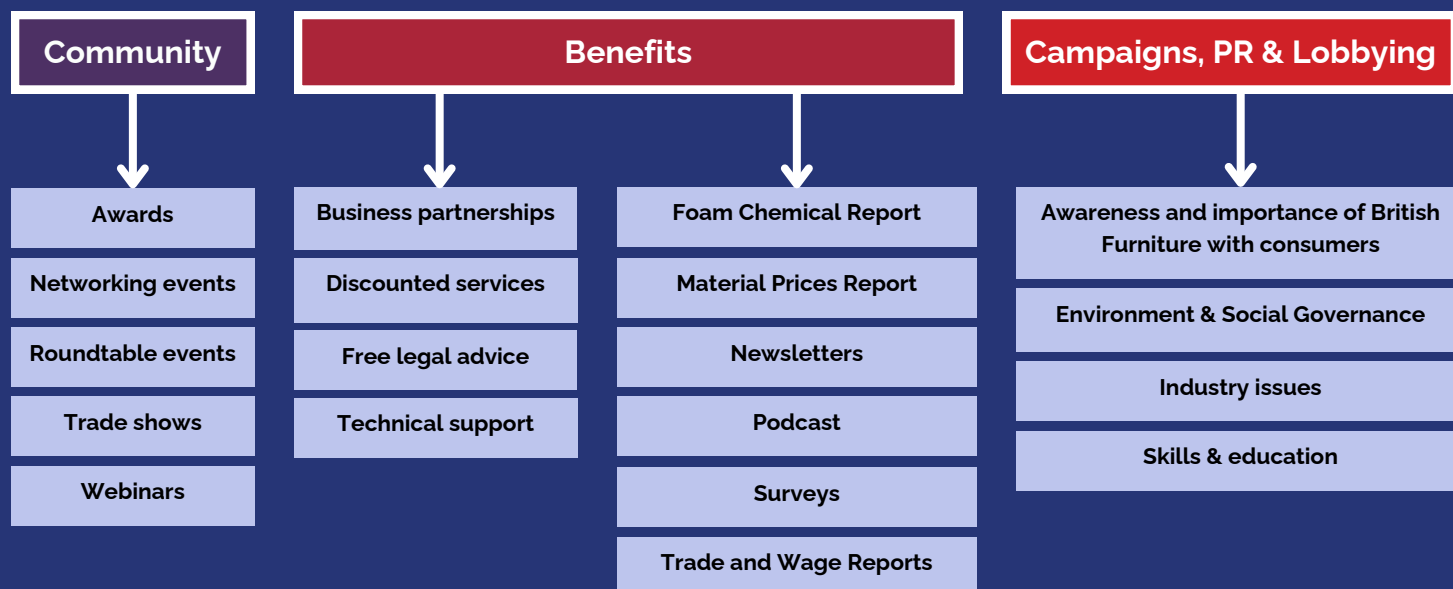


Objective 5

Continuously evaluate and improve systems, processes and data management



How we deliver our objectives:



Our performance

Objective 1

Increase membership numbers and simplify the membership categories

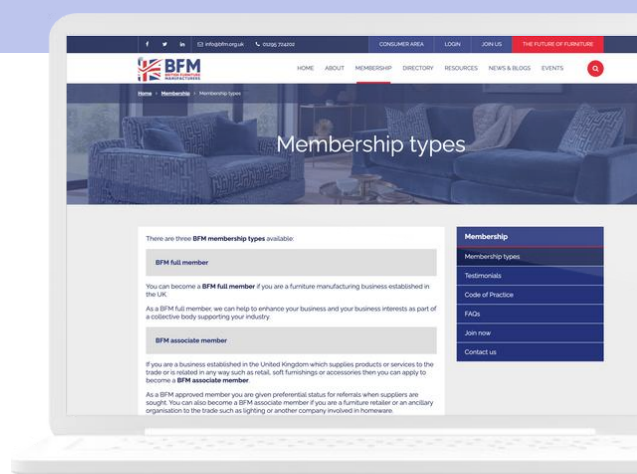
In 2024 we simplified our membership categories from:

- Member
- Approved Member
- Associate
- Approved Retailer

to three membership categories;

- Manufacturer
- Supply
- Retail

giving much needed clarity for organisations who now have a their own distinctive identity.



From March to 31 December 2024, **membership numbers grew by nearly 8%.** We currently represent **companies with a combined turnover of c£5.5 billion.**

Objective 2

Develop the membership offer to improve value for members, recruitment and retention



Our membership benefits are broadly split between our commercial partnerships who deliver specialist services, and our community building and information-sharing activities such as meetings, events, webinars and communications.

Our Partners:

Our commercial partners include:

- **ACID:** Intellectual Property support
- **Clarion:** January & Manchester Shows
- **Didac:** Health & Safety audit
- **Markel Law:** Employment & legal advice
- **Silvey Fleet:** Member's fuel card
- **Verisio:** SMETA audit

Our non-commercial partnerships include:

- **Furniture Industry Research Association (FIRA)**
- **Furniture & Interiors Education, Skills & Training Alliance (FIESTA)**
- **Furniture Industry Sustainability Programme (FISP)**
- **Planet Mark**
- **The Furniture Makers' Company**
- **The Department for Business & Trade**

Planet Mark

We partnered with Planet Mark to help members navigate the path to net zero. Planet Mark is a sustainability certification that verifies and measures carbon and social data to reduce emissions and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Clarion Events

Clarion Events is a global event organiser that produces and delivers innovative, market-leading events across various sectors.

We re-invigorated our partnership with Clarion Events to provide ongoing discounted exhibition rates at the January Furniture Show and we launched the BFA pavilion for SME members and first-time exhibitors.

Didac

We launched a new partnership with Didac to provide members with a free 'first responder' helpline offering guidance and support relating to accidents or HSE interventions. In addition, Didac conducts on-site health & safety audits.

Didac is a UK based national industrial training provider, specialising in apprenticeships and short courses for the furniture, woodworking and warehousing sectors.

Verisio

Verisio is a UK-based company specialising in social compliance, quality and sustainability auditing.

We unveiled a new partnership with Verisio to provide the Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit (SMETA), a comprehensive social compliance audit available to BFA members at a discounted rate. This offers a cost effective route to tracking ethical compliance.

Scan the below to listen to our podcast episode all about the initiative.



Objective 3

Maximise marketing and communication to amplify the BFA brand



We are consistently in the press and work closely with furniture sector journalists and publications, as well as other industry contacts, to raise awareness of our work, the value our members bring and to promote various activities.

We are also active on social media and bring together words, video and pictures to communicate news, events and discussions in an eye-catching and informative way.

Our trade press relationships support our activities and provide partnership opportunities to promote the Furniture Component Expo.



*Objective 4***Enhance our relationships with external partners to support education, training and ESG initiatives****British Furniture Confederation**

We are a founder member of the British Furniture Confederation (BFC), which maintains regular dialogue with government and other influential stakeholders to ensure that policies and initiatives support a thriving furniture, furnishings and bed sector.

Many of these activities are channelled through the All Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group (APPFIG) and the newly formed Public Affairs Advisory Committee, which aims to bring the APPFIG closer to business. The Committee consists of senior representatives from a broad cross-section of the industry to help direct BFC activity, providing detailed evidence to support their requests. These could be medium to long-term issues or requests for more immediate responses to one-off events.

Education & training

In 2023, we joined forces with The Furniture Makers' Company and other trade associations to fund an Apprentice & Skills Adviser to work on consolidating apprenticeship information and provide advice and guidance to members. The My Furniture Career website was created to offer a central place of information for students and employers.

Environmental & Social Governance

In recognition of the legal requirements for businesses to reach net zero, we partnered with Planet Mark to help members gather information and tools for their journey. Planet Mark provides an international sustainability certification that recognises progress and encourages action, supporting businesses at all stages of their net zero journey, from committing to a target to creating an action plan.

Planet Mark has been an active and enthusiastic partner, delivering free webinars and a workshop at April's Furniture Component Expo.

We are a founding member of FISP, the Furniture Industry Sustainability Programme, which recently underwent a revision of its criteria. FISP is an independently certified sustainability programme tailored to meet the needs of the Furniture Industry supply chain. Its framework provides a roadmap to drive social, economic and environmental change by continually improving members' business operations.



Objective 5

Continuously evaluate and improve systems, processes and data management



In 2022 we upgraded our digital systems by obtaining a CRM system (Spotler) and a project management platform (Monday.com)

The CRM acts as a central repository for all our data, enabling us to view, manage and communicate to our members and prospects. We are able to analyse, report and maintain our data more easily and effectively now it is contained in one place.

Monday.com has been a vital tool to enable us to plan and execute individual projects, capture information and manage our every day work.

Building our community

All our activities are designed to offer networking opportunities for industry professionals and are hosted by BFA member companies, suppliers or partners.

Regional meetings and forums are a key part of the BFA's work to provide learning opportunities and facilitate networking that nurtures meaningful connections and adds value to businesses.



Webinars

- Health & safety
- Net zero
- Business resilience
- Software solutions
- Apprentice & skills



Networking meetings

- Packaging regulations
- Apprentices & skills
- Fire safety regulations
- Exporting
- ESG



Special interest

- Sustainability roundtable
- Fire safety roundtable
- HR Forum
- Retail Steering Group



Future of Furniture

This initiative showcases education, innovation and sustainability in the industry, through case studies, video and our awards programme



Furniture Component Expo

The FCEXPO connects furniture makers and suppliers to showcase the latest products, services and technologies in the industry

The highlights

We held a cross-industry Fire Regulations Roundtable, aimed at creating a consensus on fire regulations in the furniture industry. The session attracted a broad range of representatives from sole traders and retailers to manufacturers and academics.

Our HR Forum brought together HR professionals from various companies in the furniture industry to discuss shared challenges and exchange knowledge.

Participants highlighted several common issues facing HR departments in the furniture sector including in-depth resource planning, health and safety concerns; health assessments, management of agency workers, employee retention, pay range determination and sociodemographic factors.

The HR Forum meets quarterly and has a dedicated Group Chat where members can raise topics for discussion with other group members.



We celebrated a double win - Best Business Support and Best Trade Association 2024 - at the Interiors Monthly Awards.

The two accolades shine a spotlight on the work we've been doing to support our members across the furniture industry.

We launched The Future of Furniture awards, celebrating the exemplar work in our industry in areas of education and sustainability.

Launched in 2023, the Future of Furniture Awards expanded in its second year from two to four categories, with the Excellence in Education and Excellence in Sustainability titles joined by new accolades for Environmental, Social and Governance Reporting and Sustainability Champion.

The awards celebrate members that are investing not only in their businesses, but in our industry and our communities. A panel of judges consider a number of criteria for each award, including evidence of a commitment to continuous improvement in sustainability and a willingness to lead and empower others.



Furniture Component Expo 25

We launched the Furniture Component Expo, the pioneering component trade show, at Telford International Centre. Building on the success of this inaugural event, we are already planning the next instalment, which takes place at Telford International Centre in March 2025.

A first for the industry, the initial event, held in April 2024, provided opportunities for delegates to explore products, network, gain industry insights and more, bringing specific focus to the supply side of the furniture industry and designed to meet the needs of large and small makers of furniture including beds, mattresses, cabinet and upholstery.



“

Our booth was consistently populated with new and existing customers

”

100%

of exhibitors rated FCExpo24 'Good', 'Very Good', or 'Excellent'

78%

of exhibitors achieved their objectives

“

It was a great show to visit with a lovely atmosphere and stands

”

“

The number of suppliers in one place enabled us to discuss ongoing business within a short period of time

”

www.fcexpo.co.uk

Insights for BFA members

We regularly evaluate our benefits to meet members' needs, offering essential insights on materials, trade and wages.

Our Trade and Price Trends Survey, conducted each spring and autumn, captures the latest on business conditions, employment, orders and costs.

The International Trade Review provides a detailed look at import/export values across furniture categories, tracking shifts in trade patterns and highlighting the top five countries for each sector.

Our Wages Survey covers pay, hours and holidays across 24 roles from foremen to cabinet makers, ensuring members have up-to-date wage data.

Our surveys are conducted with our members who are vital to providing this information for all.

Updates and factsheets



Monthly trade and pricing reports



Quarterly and annual trade reports



Surveys

The BFA Team

Our expert team ensures members get access to a range of benefits and services.



Nick Garratt
Chair



Phil Spademan
Managing Director



Joanna Audley-Charles
MarComms Manager



Joanna Privett
Membership Manager



Sarah Green
Head of Sales Events



Paul Vaughan
Technical Manager

Sophie Davis
Admin and Finance
Support

Our governance

The BFA Board is made up of prominent industry members, representing businesses of different sizes from upholstery, cabinet and supply.

The Board sets the direction for the future of the BFA, and scrutinises details linked to our objectives. They ultimately ensure we deliver a robust service to members.

Name	Company	Title
Nick Garratt	British Furniture Association	Chair
Paul James	One Call Furniture	Vice Chair
Brian Ahern	Furniture Makers' Company & FIRA	Past Master of the Furniture Makers' Company & FIRA Chair
Mike Aramayo	Buoyant Upholstery	Managing Director
Nichola Bell	Alpha Designs Upholstery	Sales Director
David Finch	Ercol Furniture	Managing Director
Chris Fort	Sherborne Upholstery	Chair and joint Managing Director
James Keen	Hypnos Beds	Chief Executive Officer
Ian Oscroft	Whitemeadow Furniture	Chairman
Richard Prudhoe	Fibreline	Managing Director
Emma Leeke	Leekes	Managing Director

Contact

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