

A social business

With no permanent members of staff and few overheads, the National Federation of Glaziers has a social, not financial, objective as **Anthony Jones**, chairman, explains.

It was an interesting, if not tiring, experience, exhibiting at the successful FIT show. Meeting friends gained over the years, talking with the large variety of people who make up this still vigorous industry and, of course, seeing some of our members, many of whom have been with us for over 20 years.

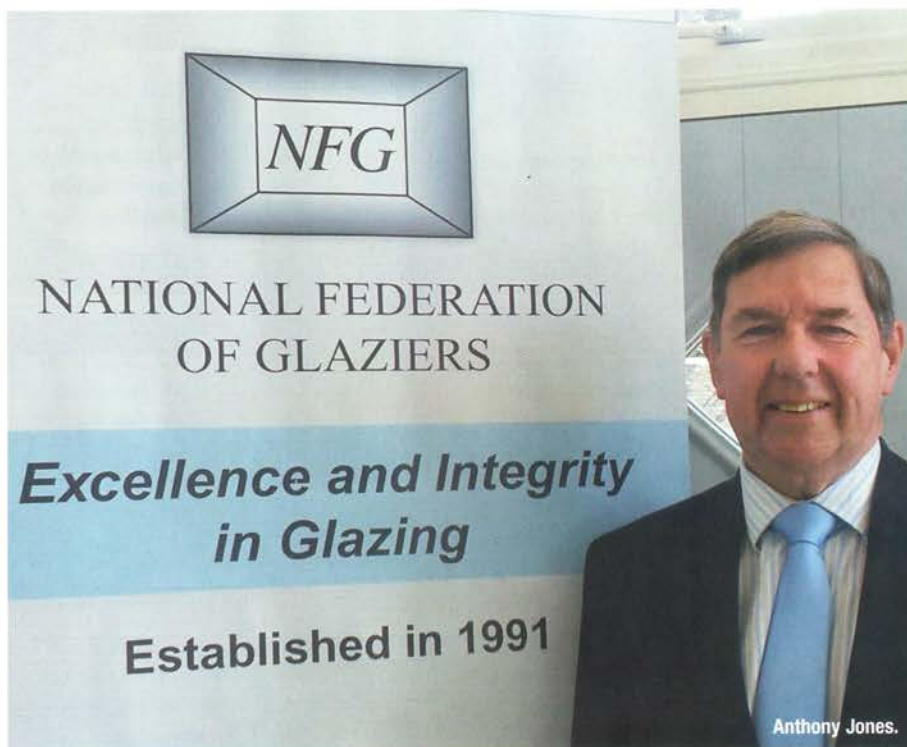
None of this would have been possible without the excellent organisation and vision of the organisers of the show, so thank you very much for the rich experience! Our team of volunteers was joined on the same stand as Insured Window Guarantees, with whom we have had a warm relationship for over 10 years. Indeed, without their co-operation we could not have afforded to take a stand as with yearly subscriptions of only £85 per member, we needed some help!

We were asked over and over again, 'what do we do', and 'why aren't we so well-known after 23 years of existence?' When we explain, the next question is often 'how can we provide all this for just £85 per year'?

EXCELLENCE AND INTEGRITY

To begin with I should outline our mission statement, as it is called today. We exist to bring together glazing industry enterprises that are genuinely interested in excellence and integrity. Excellence in the service they provide, and integrity in how they provide that service. We seek to represent and support these enterprises in every way possible, help consumers with advice and, wherever possible, to lead them to good providers of glazing.

What does this entail? It requires that all our members are kept informed of the latest issues affecting this industry, and we do this on a very regular basis. We canvass their views and talk to policy makers, liaise with other federations and associations to encourage common views and aspirations. This isn't always possible as some organisations, sadly, see us as rivals and their aims conflict with ours. For instance, acting with integrity means not offering bogus discounts, not using high pressure selling techniques and certainly not exploiting the most trusting consumer by overcharging, and/or persuading them to take out expensive finance. These kinds



of activities are the unacceptable face of this industry and not all associations or federations are prepared to ban them.

GLAZING ENTERPRISE

Our members have an obligation to our commitment to good practice, which covers all aspects of a glazing business, from advertising, right through to guarantees and after sales service. The practice of integrity runs through the entire document. In return, for a small yearly subscription, they are well informed and can ask for advice on glazing or any aspect of running a glazing enterprise. There are marketing materials, enquiries from consumers, recommended templates for contracts, guarantees and other business documents, help with any difficult customers and access to the most competitive insured guarantees. All this costs no more than their annual subscription.

How is this possible? Well, that's another question we were asked time and again at FIT.

National Federation of Glaziers is a social business, in that it has a social, rather than a financial objective. There are no permanent paid staff, and little overheads. This is how we believe a federation should operate. It is our view that federations and associations take a great deal of money from this industry, and we must ask; what is the member getting in return for their hard-earned subscription? We have everything here that the glazier needs. Week-in, week-out we deal with consumer enquiries, provide guidance and advice to our members and consumers, or, at the very least, direct them to a source which answers their questions. We are not a lead machine, as to become one would be expensive and not our proper role.

We can't change the minds of politicians, but who can? It must be obvious that despite all the expensive lobbying done by many in this industry, we are still being saddled with more and more costly regulations. If it would rid us of the cowboys, it might be worthwhile, but, until the consumer is properly informed, this will not happen – a point we have made over and over again to our political masters. Leaving it to the industry, with some of the practices mentioned above in place, simply does not work.

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For further details, visit: www.nfogl.org.uk or call: 020 7404 3099.