

Putting your trust in an expert

For most people, the daily grind through cold and wet winters is made a little more bearable with the prospect of a summer holiday to look forward to. As many fly to foreign pastures seeking the sun, it seems an appropriate analogy to consider what is expected from the pilot of the aircraft carrying your family.

Of course, he would have received the extensive training necessary to acquire the skills required to fly your aircraft. It is also reasonable to assume an expert body has assessed the degree of competence and approved the pilot's quality standard of workmanship, i.e. that a responsible organisation has decided whether a pilot is capable of flying a basic trainer aircraft or a 747.

It would also be expected that the pilot would be continually assessed to ensure skills' standards are maintained at the highest level and not compromised with the passage of time.

You would not accept someone flying your aircraft that had not been properly trained and approved for the job.

You certainly would not accept someone flying your aircraft on the strength of, say, a car driving licence, claiming that because they are a very good car driver, they could also fly your plane!

Why then, in a much less dramatic vein, is it often accepted that an otherwise competent general roofing contractor has the necessary specific training, skills, and design awareness to take on a complex lead work application?

Much like our 'very good car driver', a contractor may be 'very good' in some areas of roofing work and may even have some experience in basic flashing, but unless they are a specialist leadwork contractor it is unlikely they will possess the skills and expertise to get the very best performance from the lead sheet they are fixing.

Members of the Lead Contractors Association (LCA) are all specialist leadworkers. They have skills in other areas, with many offering services in copper, zinc, stainless steel, slating, tiling, etc. — but they are all firstly specialists in leadwork.

The LCA takes the responsibility of maintaining skills standards in the industry, through a continual on-site assessment of their members' work. Any that fail to demonstrate the required quality levels of design awareness and application skill will have membership withdrawn.

In nominating an LCA member for leadwork, an architect or specifier can therefore have peace of mind that the lead sheet aspects of their project will be completed to the highest standard by specialist contractors able to demonstrate a proven ability in their craft. In turn, the client will receive a value for money performance from both material and contractor.

Much like our car driver flying a plane, using a general contractor for the specialist craft of leadwork is an idea that should never get off the ground