

For immediate issue
PAPR01.07
18th October 2007



PANALOC - UNLOCKING THE TRUE POTENTIAL OF OFFSITE CONSTRUCTION

Looking to change the face of the offsite construction and timber frame industry sectors in the UK is Manchester-based Panaloc Limited. Established following an extensive eight-year research and development period, and involving investment in excess of £12million, Panaloc is a seamless process-led offsite construction and MMC specialist with the capability to deliver mass customised products on an unprecedented scale.

Operating out of 320,000 sq ft head office and manufacturing facilities located in Manchester's Trafford Park, Panaloc has the technology to design and manufacture structural components in the form of wall panels, roofs, pods and ceilings, all within a strict and efficient factory controlled environment.

Achieved through the deployment of automated intelligence CAD software - designed in-house by Panaloc's technical team and which is the driver behind an advanced and fully-automated CAM-CNC manufacturing process - all components are produced to exacting standards in terms of dimensional stability and accuracy.

Exhibiting excellent thermal, acoustic and fire protection properties, they are suitable for fast-track construction programmes and can incorporate mass customisation. What's more, all components are universally suitable across all sectors of the construction industry, including low and high-rise housing, hotels, key worker and student accommodation, leisure, education, hospitals and healthcare, and the commercial arena.

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SOLE UK LICENCE

Central to the production process created by Panaloc is its use of one of the world's most advanced OSB (Orientated Strand Board) products currently available. Indeed not only has Panaloc secured the sole UK rights to import OSB4 from leading Swiss company, Kronoply - renowned for its extensive range of derived timber products - the same also applies to the licensed production of Magnum board. A direct rival to traditional timber frame construction, Magnum board is the first solid wood construction system to be approved for use as walls, ceilings and roofs, and which can even be supplied with surfaces prepared for painting. It is created when three or more layers of OSB4 are pressed and glue laminated together to deliver an eco-friendly structural wall or roof panel.

Commenting on behalf of Panaloc is founder, Eric Dean: "We believe that Panaloc represents a truly unique and refreshing proposition to the UK construction industry. With a background in carpentry and woodworking, and having grown frustrated by the constraints of other construction techniques, it has always been a dream to create an offsite construction process that not only combines the best in terms of CAD-CAM and CNC machining, but which does so as a means of producing structural components that quite simply fit together like Lego.

"It is quite feasible for us to design almost any type of building, or interpret those from a third party, and engineer the complete structure for delivery and erection on-site. Such is the sophistication of our process technology, we can turn an architect's drawing into a 3D model accurate to plus or minus 1mm." /Cont...

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Eric continues: "From this we can machine panels as a seamless operation that takes in light fittings and cable routes for walls and ceilings, utility cavities and door and window openings. And having already spent a significant period of time fine tuning our processes following our set-up in January 2005, we commenced with commercial manufacturing at the start of this year."

But not only is the Panaloc philosophy based on delivering the real benefits that can be gained from offsite construction; it's also all about sustainability and renewability. As Eric injects: "Everything about our operation is the ultimate in environment-friendly. Not only are the core OSB4 raw materials that we use of the highest quality, they come from renewable sources and any waste products that are created are either fed back into panel production or used to create biomass pellets to fuel our own heating system. Indeed when it comes to OSB4, I suppose you could say we have zero waste."

PANELS AND PODS

Deploying the use of Magnum Board, Panaloc has the capacity to create wall panel structures up to 20 x 5 metres in dimension. And given the density inherent within the structure of Magnum Board, such panels can be used to create buildings up to ten storeys high without the need for any other structure.

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Manufactured under strict factory controlled conditions, panels can be supplied fully insulated and prepared with any kind of finishing material, be it brickwork, cladding or rendering, ready for transportation to site. Indeed Panaloc has even worked in close cooperation with its logistics provider, David Bratt Transport of Manchester, to design and engineer a bespoke fleet of tri-axle semi trailers that are used solely for this purpose.

Magnum Board is also used by Panaloc to create pods, whether in the form of kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms or other living spaces. Such pods come prepared with prefabricated plumbing and plug 'n' play electrics. Furthermore, they can be manufactured equipped with all fixtures and fittings – such as flooring, walling, bathroom suites, and kitchen units etc, all to the client's specification. Panaloc even has the ability to supply units with internal surfaces prepared for painting.

PORTABLE PRODUCTION

One of the core drivers behind the Panaloc process, something so far unseen within the UK construction industry, is its true portability. As Eric Dean explains: “Whilst our Manchester site can be seen as a core manufacturing hub, we aim to give our partners access to the process and technology involved for use across their own construction sites in the future, such is the portability of what we have created here.

“The modular nature of the machinery required to establish a mobile factory, makes it quite feasible for a contractor to deliver the structures required for a particular development literally onsite, after which it can then be simply transferred to another once the project is complete.”

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And to demonstrate the confidence that Eric has in the portability of the process, a trial temporary production module is in the process of being commissioned on Panaloc's Manchester site.

Concluding, Eric said: "Using the Panaloc process, we aim to offer builders, developers and contractors a means of improving the quality of construction, whilst also bringing down costs through a process of efficiency. In doing so, we will create the ability to provide construction to the otherwise unaffordable.

"To help us achieve this, we have invested heavily in the skills development of what we view as tomorrow's new generation of IT trained labour: a resource and asset base that is both multi-skilled and flexible."

Panaloc currently employs over 200 employees, including a 20 and 30-strong project and design management team. Q-Mark approved, Panaloc not only operates out of its main manufacturing facility, it has access to an additional 120,000 sq ft of space dedicated to panel processing and materials storage. The company is already in the process of looking into opening an additional factory of some 250,000 sq ft, along with numerous other facilities.

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