

# Wows and Whispers

News & comment from  
THE SILK FOREST

The title comes from a strapline we used recently about what we do.

'As effective as a subtle fabric or as functional as a well-designed chair, it can be a *Wow* or a *Whisper*.'

The idea behind this publication is not the usual '*look at what we've done aren't we brilliant*' - little short of a leaflet in disguise. The idea is that there are things in the business of display, of which some people may not be aware, things which might be of importance. That's what we'll be trying to do.

We will be using examples of things we have done to illustrate it.

Where it's appropriate, we'll point out what a great idea we had and hopefully you will be able to see how we might be able to help you.

But more than anything else, this is designed to be informative.

In this edition, we'll be riding on one of our hobby-horse subjects that anyone who knows us, will tell you we can bore for England. On the other hand it's a vital element for anyone involved in providing material and displays for public spaces.



We'll be talking fire standards and in particular how it affects artificial plants. It may be basic but you'd be surprised how it can catch you out.

...and in future editions, we'll be telling you about some of the interesting things we've done lately.

Well, if you hide your light under a bushel all you get is a well-lit bushel.

All the pictures on this page are examples of *Wows and Whispers* - things which need to look spectacular, fill a space or solve a particular problem.

You can see how we add *Wows and Whispers* at [www.thesilkforest.com](http://www.thesilkforest.com) now read on...

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## Fire Standards and Certificates

Frequently, someone asks for “a certificate”. They mean fire certificate. Not that many know what the certificate does or says but if they have it, think they’re absolved of any responsibility.

Not so, these days companies and individuals are frequently being called to account for what they do. More importantly, what they **don’t** do might have more serious ramifications.

So what is a Fire Certificate? At its simplest, it is a piece of paper that details how a product has performed in controlled tests when exposed to fire. Usually, it is a copy of a certificate produced by an independent test house, saying that at some point in time, a sample of a specific product was tested in a particular method, according to a particular standard and either passed or failed. Sometimes it may give the exact performance of the sample that was tested.

You’d think this was simple. Sorry to disappoint.

There’s one thing to watch out for and that’s the certificate that’s not a certificate.

We were shown a “certificate” provided by a company to one of our Customers as part of work being done on behalf of a company renting their premises for an event. This was for a plastic boxwood, which our client was assured was fire retarded. We were suspicious as in passing, the word *treated* was used. The certificate said something along the following lines: *this material has been treated with XYZ fire retardant in accordance with the manufacturers recommended method*. You will notice that there is no specification and no mention of testing.

There were worse aspects to this than we have space for but all this “certificate” said was that they had bought a chemical which someone said was a fire retardant and they had applied it as per the instructions leaflet. They had never bothered to check if it worked, just produced a piece of paper which committed them to absolutely nothing in the hope of avoiding any liability. You can hear the conversation: “We did what the instructions told us to do, it’s not our fault it didn’t work.”

In a fire, that particular product which was fixed to a wall, would have been in flames within seconds, generating black noxious smoke. We are in no doubt that people would have died.

So any “certificate” should have the words “tested in accordance with” somewhere in the text. Preferably it should be a recent test. It should be to a recognised standard such as BS, EN, ASTM or DIN. Ideally confirmed by tests (however rudimentary) carried out by the company making the supply.

It’s not just having the certificate that matters, it’s making sure that as near as you can be sure, it’s worth more than the paper and ink.

In future episodes of **“Fire Standards- the pitfalls”** we’ll be talking actual procedures, third-party testing and whose fault is it anyway...

### Out from under our bushel comes the following:

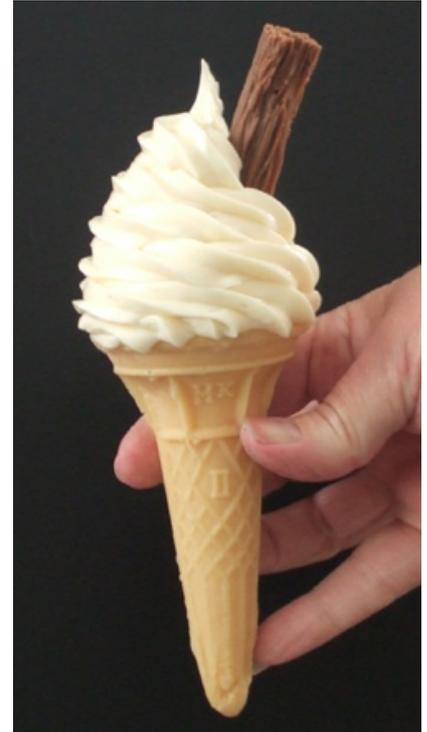
The Silk Forest has its own test rig, made specifically for testing artificial foliage. If we provide a certificate, it’s not just that we have been provided with a certificate from our foliage supplier, it means we have tested it too.

## When Thank You isn’t quite enough...

There are times when someone does something for which thank you isn’t quite enough.

So we thought we’d find a way of saying thanks in a more tangible way which won’t get the wrong side of Corporate Governance, standing orders or the Ethics Committee’s SOP’s.

In fact it’s the kind of thing which maybe should be part of everyone’s CSR policy....



*Some people have asked us what else we do, so here’s a guaranteed non-fattening ice-cream cone we supplied to a client recently. The hand is real!*

When you send us the name of someone you think would like to receive this newsletter, tell us your favourite registered charity. If your contact agrees to be added to our list, we'll send that charity a cheque for £20 from us, and give you and/or your company the credit for it.

That's 20 smackers out of our marketing budget into the skyrocket of an organization you think deserves all the help they can get.

...and the cynics amongst us will say it's the one and only time we'll be able prove a marketing expense did some good.

To keep on the right side of everyone, we'll tell them why we've sent it- as long as it's not Chatsworth and Sutton Hospitals (or C.A.S.H. for short) at someone's home address.

If they place an order with us, we'll send that charity another cheque for £200.

We've checked this out with the legal eagles and the accountancy professionals and they reckon it's pretty much beyond reproach.

...apart from the occasional misery who thinks we should give the few quid as discount.

Name and shame the po-faced so and so, we say...

BUT we have to state the following: we have to reserve the right to refuse to make a contribution and take steps to avoid abuse. This promotion does not constitute a contractual obligation of any kind on our part.

Ho...ho...ho... Christmas is on the 25th December- again, every year it surprises lots of folk who end up trying to find decorations and trees at the last minute.

If you need help, call us...

and finally...

If you prefer not to receive further news from us, mail us at [news@thesilkforest.com](mailto:news@thesilkforest.com) with "unsubscribe" in the subject line and we'll remove you from the list

...then cry ourselves to sleep. And occasionally, in future, we may look wistfully into the middle distance, a hurt smile will cast a shadow across our faces for a moment but given time, we'll get over it...

### **Now here's a thought**

**There is a fine line  
between fishing and  
standing on the bank with  
a stick**

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*However, if you want us to accept some responsibility, you'll have to pay us for doing something -this lot comes free.*