



Furniture Times



The Association for British Furniture Manufacturers

www.bfm.org.uk

www.greatbritishfurniture.co.uk

October 3 2010

In This Issue

- New EU maternity proposals
- Price trends - wire

In The next Issue:

We will examine the government plans to oblige all employers to offer and contribute to pensions - beginning in October 2012 for the larger employers with a phasing-in period for smaller employers

See:

Department for Work & Pensions

Staging dates

National Employment Savings Trust

NEW MEMBER

We would like to welcome into BFM membership:

FOREST SOFA

NEW EU PROPOSALS FOR MATERNITY – 20 WEEKS FULL PAY, A BAR ON DISMISSAL & TIME OFF FOR BREASTFEEDING

THE EU parliament has voted in favour of a number of measures designed to strengthen maternity protection.

Its proposals, which must now go for approval by the EU countries, include 20 weeks full maternity pay and rules banning employers from dismissing pregnant workers until six months after the end of their maternity leave (although the details on this are rather vague at the moment).

In addition, women would not be obliged to perform night work or work overtime during the 10 weeks prior to childbirth, during the remainder of the pregnancy in cases where the mother or the unborn child have health problems, and during the entire period of breastfeeding.

Another measure would see two separate one hour periods of time off for breastfeeding, unless another arrangement is agreed with the employer. For multiple births the leave increases by 30 minutes for each additional child. The period of time off is



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calculated on a pro-rata basis for part-time workers, but must not be less than 30 minutes.

Current UK rules mean that employers have to pay six weeks' maternity pay at 90% of the mother's salary. Women then receive a further 33 weeks' statutory maternity pay currently at £124.88 a week. At present, an employer can claim most or all of this back depending on their liability for Class I NIC's.

If SMP rose to 20 weeks at full pay it is estimated that it would cost the UK an extra £2-2.5 billion a year, a liability that the coalition government would not welcome at the moment and may trigger thoughts of shifting the payment burden entirely to employers. However the UK, Germany and France have said they will oppose these plans.

For the text of the Directive as agreed by the European Parliament to become law, it will have to be approved by a qualified majority of the Council of the European Union. Given the state of public finances across Europe, it is unlikely that the Council will not seek to amend the proposed text, but it should be noted that the United Kingdom does not have a veto on this matter.

Meanwhile MEPs have approved an 85% increase in the amount parliament spends on "entertainment" which will mean that the budget is now over £2 million.

Other countries and their maternity pay

India –12 weeks full pay

China – 90 days full pay/no dismissal during pregnancy

US –12 weeks unpaid leave - businesses with under 50 staff do not offer any maternity leave

Brazil – 180 days full pay

France - 16-26 weeks full pay

Netherlands - 16 weeks' full pay

Spain - 16 weeks' full pay

Italy - 20 weeks' at 80% pay

Government
buying
standards
furniture

Germany - 14 weeks full pay

Sweden - 14 weeks full pay

Ireland - 26 weeks 70% or fixed rate pay



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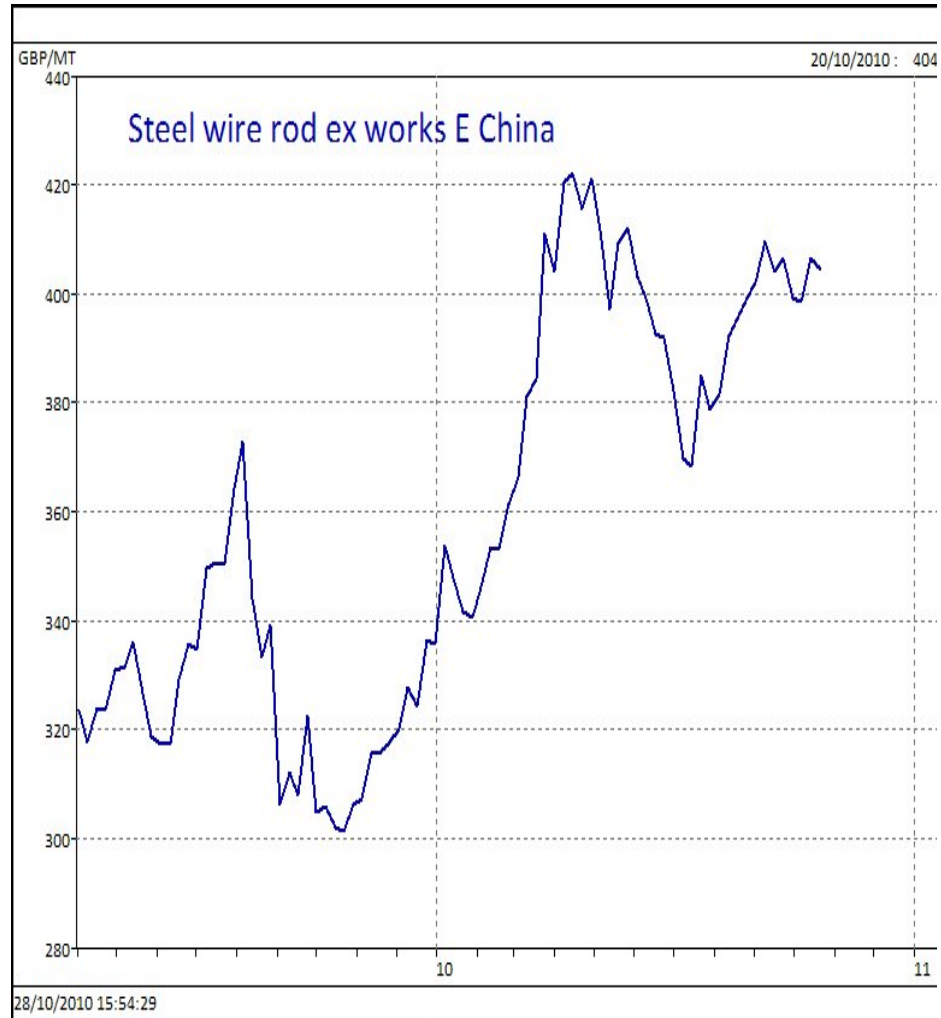
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