

# Slating & Tiling

## TI PS 79

### Planning part 1

There is a well known maxim that says 'if you fail to plan then you plan to fail'. What planning is required when slating or tiling a roof, and what pitfalls should we look out for?

As a nation, we British tend to start projects quickly with a basic plan and sort out problems as they arise, modifying the plan accordingly, whilst our neighbours the French tend to make a detailed plan and stick to it come what may, even when the unexpected arises, on the basis that they have allowed for it in the plan. Now I am not saying one approach is better than the other, as each has its merits, but no planning, or too much planning can result in problems.

### Training

The first step with any plan is training. All members of the team need to be trained to perform their function, and a steady stream of new people coming into the learning process allows the same number to come out at the other end as qualified tradesmen and managers. Nobody knows everything, so each person should have an area of knowledge that they are an expert in, and an area into which they are learning and developing, and they should also know what they are incapable of, so that they do not overstretch themselves.

At the same time each employer should record what each person is expert at and what they need to learn, to allow them to plan and cope with the challenges that lie ahead. Too often learning is seen as a threat by some managers, who do not want staff to know more about certain subjects than they do. Not everybody is good at structured learning; many people are good at copying what they see other people do, and by practice become expert at it. This process works well provided the mentor who is being copied is an expert. Too often bad practices are copied and perpetuated that can create long term problems. Whilst a slate is a slate is a slate,

the construction of the building onto which it is being fixed has changed, along with the regulations and recommendations regarding insulation, condensation control and other related construction issues. The addition of new products to make roofing work quicker and easier means that things are constantly changing and new knowledge needs to be gained.

### Information gathering

Before any project is started the relevant documents need to be gathered together to allow a full picture of the project to be gained. If there is a gap in the information then requests for that information should be made. On every occasion when roofing work is involved, site visits will be needed to understand the full implications of the information that has been provided, or to gather further information that is not available on the documentation, such as the position of telephone cables, out-buildings or other obstructions. It is only when the full facts have been gathered that planning the project can begin.

At each stage the relevant documentation and the plan need to be collated and passed onto the next level. The specifier needs to gain information from the client, expand on the documentation and pass the relevant part to the main contractor who breaks it down into elements, expands the documentation and passes the relevant parts onto the sub contract management, who breaks down the information, expands on it and passes on the relevant parts to the trade foreman on site, who instructs the tradesmen. At the same time materials and plant are being ordered and scheduled, health and safety method statements are being produced and approved, and other projects are being monitored in the same way.

The flow of information is essential for the man on site to do the job correctly, knowing when materials and other trades will arrive so that everything can

progress as planned. Too often the roof tile fixing specification never reaches site, so it is impossible for the tradesman to fix the tiles correctly without that piece of information, or a material supplier changes, altering the dimensions for the fascia board height or the flashing kit.

### Process

Materials and plant all need to be quantified and ordered to ensure that it is on site at the correct time. Too often the plant that arrives is inappropriate for the site, either being too small, too big, or incapable of being used in the planned location due to restricted widths between buildings, or other building work going on around the site.

Too often materials are not available and work starts without an essential component, such as eaves and verge clips being delivered late and having to be installed after the rest of the roof tiles have been fixed. All materials should be scheduled to be on site before they are needed. Too early and they will get in the way, damaged or stolen, too late and their installation will compromise another component. Often a key component will be found to be totally unavailable and an alternative needed. The sooner this is found, the better chance that everything else can be changed to accommodate it, and no delay to the programme arises.

For example if a 600 x 300mm slate is changed to a 500 x 250mm slate, it will require more nails, more slate and a half, more battens and the battens set at a smaller gauge; it will affect the detailing and position of dormers and ventilation slates.

If specifications are changed, or modifications are made, or components that penetrate the roof covering added, tradesmen will inevitably need to access the finished roof, which will inevitably result in disturbance, or breakage, due to tradesmen standing on the tiles or slates, especially if the rafter pitch is



*The roof was completely tiled with clay plain tiles before the carpenter had finished the rafter feet and installed the fascia boards.*

shallow. A roof covering that is dismantled never goes back the same and if done by non-roofing tradesmen is often put back incorrectly. Too often slates are reinstalled using mastic, tile clips and nails are missing, resulting in problems at a later date. This could have been avoided or reduced with planning.

### Conclusion

Planning does not need to be a time consuming process, and it should not become the God to be revered, but a tool to be used. Regardless of the size of the project, a plan, however simple, is needed. In most cases the planning process is a state of mind whereby a new project automatically triggers a few notes that set the planning process in motion.

### Tips

- Time spent training may be hard to justify in terms of lost earnings but will be more than made up for by improved quality and reduced remedial works.
- Gather together and read through all the documentation before you commit yourself to any project. It is difficult to get it right, and easy to get it wrong. During the planning process you will not get it 100% right but the more you do it the better you will get at planning.

Compiled by Chris Thomas FIoR  
The Tiled Roofing Consultancy  
2 Ridlands Grove, Limpsfield Chart,  
Oxted, Surrey, RH8 0ST  
tel: 01883 724 774  
[email:chris.thomas@thetiledroofingconsultancy.com](mailto:chris.thomas@thetiledroofingconsultancy.com)

To view previous Slating & Tiling Tips, go to:  
[www.thetiledroofingconsultancy.com](http://www.thetiledroofingconsultancy.com)

