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WICONA OPENS NEW DEDICATED TEST CENTRE – ONE OF EUROPE'S 1ST ENERGY NEUTRAL INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

Hydro Building Systems has opened a new dedicated test centre for its Wicona brand of façade products – one of the first energy neutral industrial buildings in Europe.

Located at Bellenberg near the Wicona Brand Development Centre at Ulm in Germany, €3.5m scheme will allow new products and project-specific façade solutions to be tested in-house and independently certified to the latest European standards.

The testing procedures and equipment have been developed by Wicona in conjunction with IFT Rosenheim (Institute of Window Technology), an independent accreditor. Facilities in the new centre include two façade test rigs, a testing rig for windows and accessories, and a 'hot box' to assess thermal performance.

The façade test rig allows samples up to 10m by 10m to be rigorously tested under a full range of stringent weather performance and safety conditions – air permeability, static and dynamic water pressure, wind and impact resistance.

The window test rig is designed for combinations of windows, doors and fixed light glazing with frame sizes of up to 3.6m by 2.9m, assessing air permeability, water tightness, and wind and impact resistance. There is also a fitting rig to carry out performance tests on doors and windows up to 4m high, and their fittings and accessories.

The new Wicona test centre is designed to be highly energy efficient and sustainable, consuming only 23kWh/m²a of energy for heat and light – around the same as a standard passive house. Roof-mounted photovoltaic panels harness energy from the sun and generate sufficient power for heating and lighting the entire building. The surplus 30,000kWh/a produced also provides the operating energy for the test centre, making it one of the first zero emission production buildings.

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An innovative Wicona façade solution is integrated with the building services and low energy technology, and is highly glazed to allow most of the testing to be carried out without the need for artificial lighting. The large volumes of water required for the façade tests use a closed water circuit to minimise consumption.

Commenting on the new facility, Bob Welsh, General Manager of Wicona in the UK, said, “This is a fantastic new resource for the Wicona brand. To have a facility of this quality that is dedicated to Wicona products and fitted out with state-of-the-art testing systems, reinforces our position as a market leader in façade technology.”

“The new centre will allow us to continue to develop innovative solutions as well as designs for more bespoke, project-specific applications, and will give us the opportunity to pre-test and pre-certify new systems more efficiently and at an earlier stage.”

“The building, which showcases a Wicona façade, is also designed to be highly sustainable as part of Hydro’s ongoing commitment to minimising impact on the environment. As a business, we will be involved in the design of energy neutral building projects in the future so this is an excellent example of that in practice with our own facilities.”

In the UK, Wicona offers a full package of services for highly engineered glazing solutions and unitised façade projects. The Wicona team oversees every stage of the façade construction, from concept design and the development of the glazing solution through to fabrication, installation and testing.

Unitised façades are a highly efficient option for sites with little or no access, eliminate scaffolding to improve site safety, and can cut programme times by up to 70 per cent, allowing a watertight envelope to be completed for earlier fitting out, handover and occupation.

For further information about Wicona’s façade solutions, visit www.wiconaprojects.co.uk or call 0845 602 8799.

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Editors' Notes

1. The advantages of the unitised façade approach include:
 - reductions in time on site by up to **70 per cent**
 - improved safety – fewer operatives on site and scaffolding may not be required
 - the façade panels are manufactured off site and craned into position – a highly efficient solution for sites with restricted access
 - earlier fitting out and a faster return on investment for the developer
 - high quality and performance because the façade panels are completed off site in a controlled factory environment
 - accurate installation and interfaces
 - cost savings on site preliminaries and scaffolding
 - storage of cladding materials and glass handling on site is eliminated – a major advantage for constrained city centre sites
 - panel sizes up to 4m x 4m can easily be accommodated
 - the units can be fixed to steel or concrete frames and installed using a crane or monorail system
 - there is no limit on building movement.
2. Hydro Building Systems is the largest supplier of aluminium glazing systems in Europe, which includes the Wicona brand. Wicona is the first façade specialist in the UK to design and oversee complex and unitised façade projects.
3. If you wish to publish a telephone number for further information, the number for Wicona is 0845 602 8799. Please do not print the agency's number.

For further PRESS information, please contact:

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