

# Harnessing the power of daylight

**D**avid Willetts is championing the cause of natural light in the belief that it improves people's mind sets and health. He is the chairman of SerraLux, a company founded in 2012 which has created SerraGlaze®, a see-through film applied to the interior surfaces of new and existing windows. The film contains micro-structured 'louvers' – thinner than a human hair – that help convert harsh glare into beneficial daylight by redirecting the incoming sunlight upwards whilst maintaining a clear view out of the window.

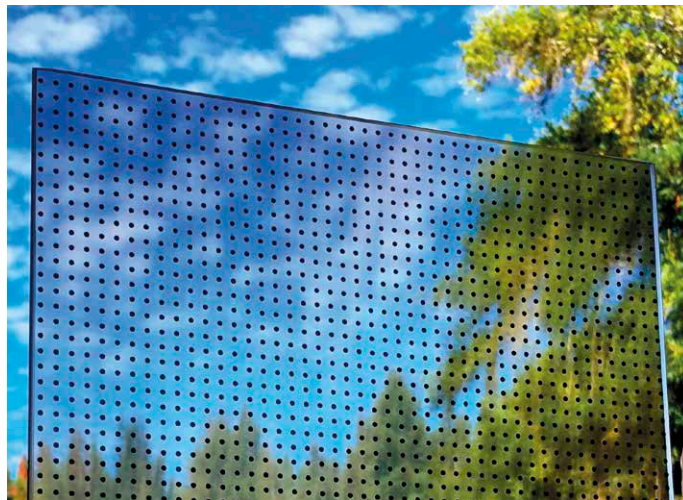


David Willetts

Some very smart brains from both sides of the Atlantic have been involved in the product's development and the resulting product is based both on established scientific theory and new technology. At its heart though there is a simple concept. As Willetts says: "We all feel better when waking up to a sunlit day. That's not rocket science, it's just a normal, natural human response to daylight."

## Boost

Indeed natural light has been found to help beat seasonal affective



disorder, increase levels of Vitamin D, aid concentration and alertness, improve a variety of skin conditions and even boost immune systems. "It's clear that the benefits of sunlight go way beyond just making people feel better. We are able to live in harmony with our natural circadian rhythms."

At present the company operates both in the UK and US markets in schools and offices where it is said to reduce absenteeism and make workers and students more effective and attentive. Naturally there is also interest from the retail and healthcare sectors as well as schools and offices – testament, says Willetts of the reputation that has been built both sides of the pond. "As awareness around wellbeing grows, so too will the awareness around natural light and its role in improving employee satisfaction levels."

## Deeper

The company has new products on the horizon which are aided by new technology to bring light deeper into the room, helping people to harness the maximum amount of daylight. "The vision is two-fold," says Willetts. "First, we are focussing on developing our practical products – we have designs in the pipeline and lots of behind the scenes work which is coming to fruition. The next logical step after production is to then get that rolled out more widely, on a global basis. We are also currently conducting research into markets in the Middle East and India, where there is a lot of sun and we're excited about expanding our geographical reach. After all it's the same sun wherever you are in the world."

The second goal is about changing mindsets. "Rather than make

good use of beneficial daylight and turn off the lights in the day time, all too often everyone from architects to facility managers tend only to see the unwanted effects of the sun and automatically seek to block it out by drawing the blinds.

"We need to encourage thinking which recognises the importance of daylight on our bodies, and our environment and strive to educate the next generation about the benefits. Instead of blocking light out we should manage it to reduce our dependence on artificial light during the day. Independent research conducted by Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories in California has demonstrated that very significant energy savings are achievable when SerraGlaze® is installed."

David Willetts has a thirty-year history of *pro bono* work in London, first founding and leading an Enterprise Agency in East London, followed by a similar role with agencies for the built environment – Changing Places, Changing Lives.

Following six years' service as an elected member of the Council of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Willetts currently serves as trustee of the LCCI Commercial Education Trust, supporting and funding research and practical projects to imbed commercial education in schools, higher education and in industry and commerce.

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