



The light simply floods in to this ultra modern property in Formby

THE LONG VIEW

Kristian Hansen founded Clear Living, with its offices in Wincham, in 2007, after spotting a gap in the market he was perfectly placed to fill, writes Kate Houghton

KRISTIAN grew up with the expectation that he would follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps into the family business, a commercial glazier working on projects of considerable size and aesthetic impact. However, an increasing number of queries from domestic architects caught his attention and he decided to investigate options for diversification.

'We were getting requests from architects and builders on domestic projects that we were turning down all the time,' he tells me. 'They weren't big enough to be of interest to our business, but they were too complex for domestic glazing specialists to be capable of.

I realised that there was a gap in the market for a business who could handle the very high end, challenging projects where architects were designing in contemporary, large scale glazing. I couldn't see this being a trend that would go away, either.'

As a result of this realisation, Kristian decided to set up on his own, first working from his kitchen at home – as so many Cheshire entrepreneurs do – before moving to his first offices on a trading estate in Higher Whitley.

'Glazing on the scale that we do it is more than simply fitting a window into a brick opening. The use of glass as ceilings or as walls



A dramatic interior at Cefn Castell



An interior at Cefn Castell

has huge impact on more than simply the aesthetics of a building, it's a major structural component. The vast majority of queries we receive come directly from architects, though sometimes they have been pointed in our direction by their client, who has seen our work elsewhere or in a magazine like *Cheshire Life*, for example. If we get a query direct from the property owner, who may be undertaking a self-build, we ask to meet the architect and if they don't have one, we can refer them to people we know and have worked with successfully on other projects.

'We've noted an increasing willingness for people to invest in good design, to not cut corners and hope for the best.'

Clear Living has worked on projects across Cheshire, the UK and into Europe. They've been involved in every kind of build from traditional barn conversions to those 'sugar cube' homes you see on programmes such as *Grand Designs*, all blocked lines and huge glassed spaces.

On average, Clear Living undertake 40 projects each year, from straightforward £20,000 'small' projects to huge and awe-inspiring £500,000 ones. To manage this Kristian employs a team of three design engineers, who take the architect's plans and 'make it happen.'

'They all come from engineering backgrounds and have huge experience in glazing projects,' says Kristian. 'It's the architect's job to design and ours to make it work technically.'

'We work with a variety of materials; steel, fibre-glass, carbon-fibre...our objective is to engineer the glass itself to the max while reducing the frame widths to the minimum – while maintaining the necessary structural rigidity to support what is often a vast weight of glass.'

Clear Living has accomplished some glorious work; even just a quick wander around their website shows the variety and beauty of what they do, from entire glass rooms in Abersoch to complete ▶



Jane and Kristian Hansen



The Shed, in Formby, is a dramatic example of Clear Living's work

rear walls in Alderley Edge to double height glass halls in London's Bedford Square. I ask Kristian, an easy yet focussed character for whom the word 'chilled' could have been invented, whether he has some favourite projects.

'The sad fact is that often we put the windows in when the build is still a million miles off finished, so we often don't get to see the completed property. The most memorable projects are those where we do get to meet and know the end client and where we've overcome some challenges on the way. We had one in North Wales where the access was along a tiny single track road and we had to get creative about getting the glass delivered. There was one in London where we closed down the roads while we used a crane to lift a single panel of glass over five storeys. There's no such thing as a little mistake in this business. The whole office here was on tenterhooks while we did that one!'

It all sounds very Grand Designs to me and, unsurprisingly, Clear Living have been involved in more than one televised house build, including the property in Criccieth, in North Wales, that featured on the Channel 4 show, then went on to win Welsh Architects House Award and LABC Residential Award for Wales and was shortlisted for British House of the Year in the RIBA Grand Designs Awards.

From the people in the office, including his wife Jane and the design engineers, to the dedicated teams of specialist fitters who work on every



Barn Conversion in High Legh, with Llama Developments

project, every member of the Clear Living team shares one simple philosophy: the customer is always, but always, right.

Kristian said: 'From 'normal' Cheshire homeowners to multi-billionaires who have no clue or concept of what goes into their property build, we make sure that whatever they want, or have been promised, they get. It's often a challenge, but it's always ultimately satisfying.' ♦

clear-living.co.uk