

## Supplies and demand

Build back better, say Boris and Biden. In the present boom, however, construction activity expanded at the fastest pace since June 1997, according to the latest Construction PMI data (Hugh Graham writes).

Suppliers' delivery times lengthened to the greatest extent since the survey began just over 24 years ago, surpassing the previous record seen in April 2020. Severe shortages of construction products and materials resulted in a survey record rise in purchasing prices in June. In terms of building materials, those who took part in the survey commented on short supply across the board, particularly cement, concrete, plaster, steel, timber and roof tiles. Imbalanced supply and demand resulted in rapid cost inflation across the construction sector in June. Adding to cost pressures in June was the steepest rise in rates charged by subcontractors since the survey began.

Brian Berry, chief executive of the Federation of Master Builders, said: "The building materials shortage is disproportionately affecting small builders and threatening their recovery from the pandemic, despite strong growth in the construction sector. The materials shortage is proving a serious detriment to businesses and consumers. As the country reopens for business, it's imperative that building firms have better access to the materials they need. Given that confidence is rapidly dropping away, the lack of materials needs addressing before jobs and business continuity start to be compromised. Small firms form over 90 per cent of the construction industry, and they are experiencing the most difficulties as a result of these shortages." The slogan is fast becoming build back faster – and cheaper.

**Bag a Wag's kitchen – for £50,000**  
Can't decide what to buy yourself to celebrate scoring for your country?

Fortunately Clive Christian Furniture, designer of bespoke kitchens for football royalty, including many of the Manchester United team (though the brand refuses to be partisan), happens to be launching the perfect thing: a super-luxe Garden Kitchen (Katrina Burroughs writes).

Costing £50,000, it's the Lancashire workshop's first new release in a decade. Rather than featuring exotic wood inlays and Swarovski crystals, as seen in Clive Christian's indoor creations, the Garden Kitchen, *pictured*, draws aesthetic inspiration and technical tricks from the world of yacht design.

The pinstriped timber fronts, ebonised iroko on a carcass of marine ply, reference glamorous classic craft such as those made by Riva, and the handles, in mirror-polish stainless steel, resemble deck cleats. Precisely what the returning hero needs to help him to kick back and enjoy a staycation summer.



## Lodge in Heath Ledger's lair

The cult of Heath Ledger has only grown since his death in 2008. The Australian actor, who died of an accidental overdose at the age of 28, has become the James Dean for the millennial generation with roles in *The Dark Knight* and *Brokeback Mountain*. Now you can rent the house he lived in while he shot *The Dark Knight* in London in 2007 (Hugh Graham writes).

The six-bedroom house on Roman Way, in Islington, north London, was a furniture factory before being converted into a house in 2004. Available to rent for £12,500 a month with Dexters, it has a rooftop garden and a courtyard garden.

There is clearly something about Roman Way, in the Barnsbury pocket of Islington, that lures celebrities: that same year the actress Kirsten Dunst rented it while shooting *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*.

But it is the memory of Ledger that will attract the groupie renters. [dexters.co.uk](http://dexters.co.uk)