



PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE, MIKE THORNTON VISITS LOCAL SCREWFIX

Leading trade supplier, Screwfix, welcomed Parliamentary candidate, Mike Thornton, to its Eastleigh store this week to meet with its staff and customers.

Mike was keen to learn more about the struggles of tradesmen in the UK. Screwfix has been talking to its trade customers to find out what help they would like from the future government. Screwfix's *Tradesman Manifesto** highlights some of the key issues tradesmen are facing.

Ben Whitlocke, Store Manager of the Screwfix store in Eastleigh shared with Mike some of the feedback from its trade customers.

UK tradesmen, ahead of 2015 elections, are calling for Government support to increase the availability of skilled workers through the encouragement of apprenticeships. More than three quarters want the Government to raise the number of apprenticeship places from 110,000 to 400,000 to encourage as many school leavers to take up apprenticeships as go to university.

The *Tradesman Manifesto** reveals the importance of the availability of skilled tradesmen and women in the UK. Many of the plumbers, electricians, builders, carpenters and other tradesmen questioned have little or no experience of taking on apprentices with only 14% having employed one in the last year. Cost is the biggest barrier to taking on an apprentice for more than one third of tradesmen and research suggests more funding for apprenticeships would allow businesses to train future tradesmen and women. Many tradesmen also feel that low pay is discouraging potential apprentices and more than half would like to raise the minimum wage to attract the best new talent.

Ben commented: "As a key supplier to the trade, it's important to give our trade customers a voice by gathering feedback and submitting it on their behalf. Many of our customers are busier than ever right now so it's important we work closely with the wider industry and the Government to consider ways to help them and to encourage growth in their businesses."

Mike commented: “From plumbers to builders and bricklayers, good tradesmen and women are the real working hands of any successful town or city, and Eastleigh is no exception. It was great to visit the local Screwfix store and get a chance to discuss the priorities and the key issues facing tradespeople in Eastleigh. It was particularly interesting to discuss the importance of skilled workforce. It is clear that, without new blood to the industry, a whole generation will lack the critical skills to build and maintain our homes, businesses, hospitals and schools. This is why, while in government, the Lib Dems created more new apprentices than ever before. I hope the next government keeps up the momentum and works to encourage more employers to take on apprentices, including tradespeople.”

Tradesmen’s views on other important topics were also captured by the *Tradesman Manifesto*. Nearly three quarters want action to reduce paperwork and cut ‘red tape’ as more than half say they spend nearly one month a year on form filling and bureaucracy. Tax is also an important issue to UK tradesmen with 72% considering tax to be a priority for future Government to take action.

For more information on Screwfix visit www.screwfix.com, call 0500 41 41 41 or mobile-friendly on 03330 112 112.

*Screwfix *Tradesman Manifesto* is a survey of more than 600 UK tradesmen undertaken to understand what is important to them and how they are reacting to the constantly changing economic and technological landscapes. It was submitted to the Chancellor in March 2015.

ENDS

Note to editors

About Screwfix:

Screwfix is part of Kingfisher plc, Europe’s leading home improvement retail group and the third largest in the world www.kingfisher.com. Screwfix is recognised as being “where the trade buys” offering a straightforward and transparently-priced retail experience that enables busy tradesmen to shop 23,000 products over the phone, online, via their mobile or from their local store.

- From power tools and workwear to cables and pipe fittings, more than 11,000 products are available to pick up from the national network of over 365 stores. A further range of over 10,000 products can be ordered over the phone, online or from a local store for next day delivery, with orders taken up until 7pm to home or site.

- [Screwfix.com](https://www.screwfix.com) attracts 1.5 million unique visitors per week and the Screwfix Click & Collect service means customers can conveniently purchase supplies online (or over the phone) and then collect from store just five minutes later.
- Customers can call the UK-based Screwfix Contact Centre 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including bank holidays) on 0500 41 41 41, or on the mobile-friendly 03330 112 112.
- All of our 365+ stores are open 7 days a week and from 7am Monday to Friday, making sure we are ready when our customers are.
- 9 out of 10 customers would recommend Screwfix to a friend.

PRESS information:

For more information, please contact:

Gemma Williams, McCann Public Relations, Tel: 0121 713 3775
gemma.williams@mccann.com

Rachel Tillman, McCann Public Relations, Tel: 0121 713 3593
rachel.tillman@mccann.com