



Left: Grand Design Blinds fitted out several different areas of this barn conversion, including glass gables, skylights and doors.

Below: This floor-to-ceiling, multi-paned, curved window has custom-made screening from Grand Design Blinds.

Bottom: A wall of sliding glass doors fitted with Grand Design Blinds' remote-controlled motorised blinds, connected to a home-automation system.



Ask the Expert

Large expanses of glass fill kitchens and living spaces with light but how can you control the heat? Jonathan Pelly-Fry of Grand Design Blinds explains

Words: **Ruth Bell**

1 Large areas of glass are not new to British homes. Seventeenth-century orangeries made the most of the sun, trapping heat to grow exotic plants. The Victorians added glass roofs to the equation, using grand conservatories as living spaces. Glass extensions, rooflights and big patio doors are universal now, as we all want more light in our homes. But technology has made big advances in recent years, in both the area which a single glass panel can cover and in the fixing systems. These allow architects to design homes with ever-larger areas of glass, from double-height bi-fold doors to glass walls and dramatic feature windows.

2 The upside of living with glass is the wonderful light and sense of space, but the downside is the need to consider privacy, security and glare, as well as temperature and climate control. Screening is the answer to all of these problems, but standard blind systems are not designed to work with extra-large areas of glass or shaped windows. These always need specialist solutions. Grand Design Blinds custom-make blinds as much as 4.5 metres wide and can work around the most unusual shapes.

3 One of the key reasons to screen is to prevent heat build-up. When sunlight hits glass windows, roofs or doors, some of its energy is absorbed by the glass, which then acts like a radiator, and the rest passes through, heating

everything inside. Heat trapped inside the building (the greenhouse effect) makes the indoor temperature uncomfortably hot. This is a problem in any room, but especially in kitchens, which are already generating heat and moisture.

4 Installing a window blind traps an insulating layer of air and reflects the sun's rays back through the glass. This is especially effective if the blinds are a pale colour or have a solar reflective coating and/or an insulating structure. Not only will this prevent heat build-up and regulate the interior temperature in the hotter months, it will also stop glare on bright days at any time of year. You need to be able to screen large glass windows at night, both to stop people seeing into your home and to help make it feel cosy. Equally, if you are away from home, it's reassuring to be able to block views from outside, as well as keeping the temperature stable.

5 Really large window or roof blinds are usually motorised and can be linked to most home automation systems, including those from Lutron and Crestron. Many of these have sunlight sensors or thermostats, which will operate the blinds automatically when a pre-set temperature is reached to prevent heat build-up. You can also use an app to set them to open and close to a schedule, again adding to home security. Grand Design Blinds start from £1800. **[KBB]**

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