

SPEC FINISH

FIS

The magazine of FIS
representing the finishes
and interiors sector

www.thefis.org

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE AT THE 2025 FIS SCOTTISH AWARDS



Legal:

The power of collaboration: Avoiding conflict through behavioural insight

Sustainability:

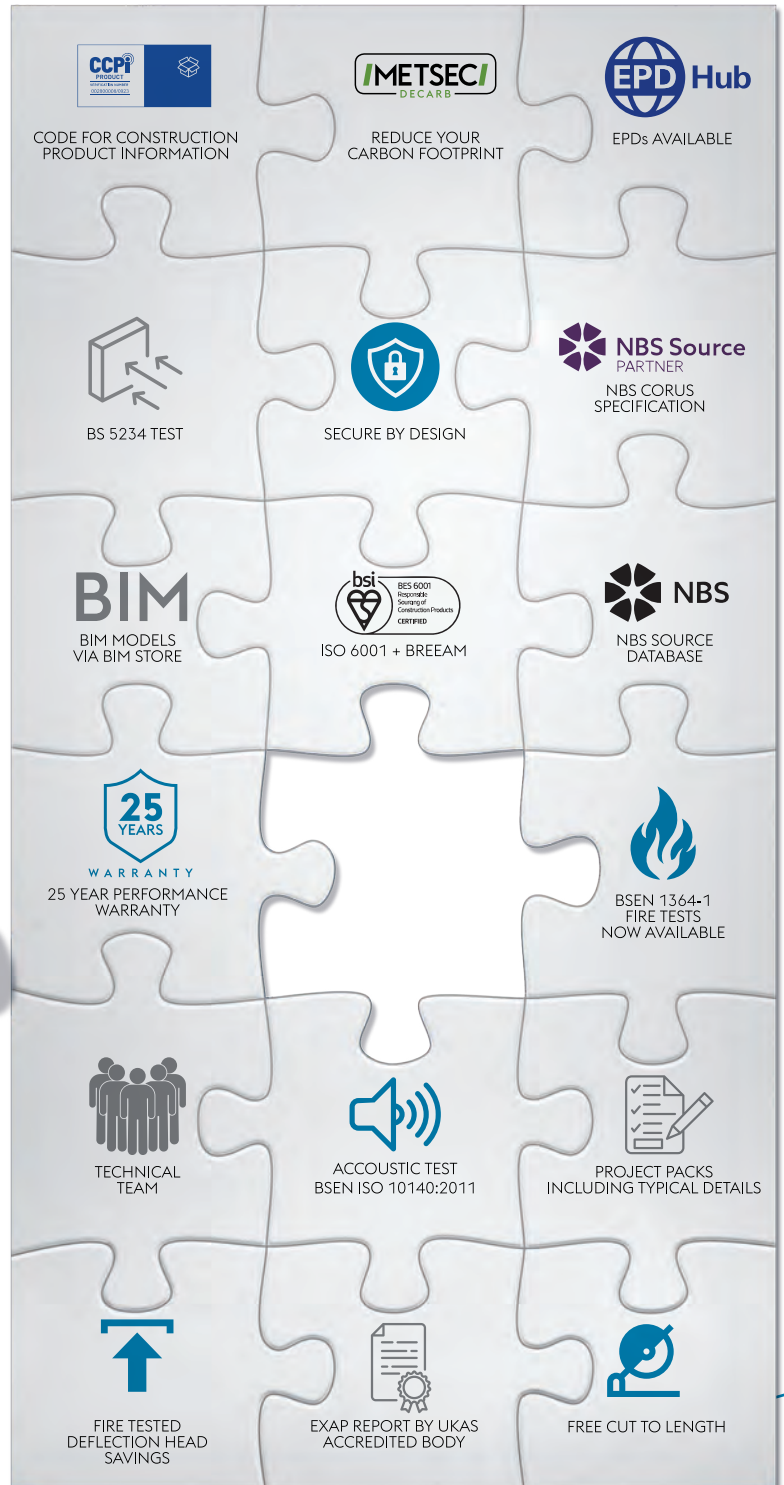
The power of product transparency: EPDs and the new standard in specification

Technical:

The overlooked key to unlocking Gateway 2 delays



#TRUST METSEC



WE'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE, BUT THIS TIME, IS IT DIFFERENT?

The Government is consulting on new late payment rules, including mandatory 60-day terms, fines, and stronger enforcement. This is a key chance to drive real change in construction.



IAIN MCILWEE
Chief Executive, Finishes and Interiors Sector

Commenting on the launch of the new Government consultation **Late payments: tackling poor payment practices** on 30 July, the Prime Minister, Kier Starmer stated: "From builders and electricians to freelance designers and manufacturers - too many hardworking people are being forced to spend precious hours chasing payments instead of doing what they do best - growing their businesses. "It's unfair, it's exhausting, and it's holding Britain back. So, our message is clear: it's time to pay up".

Strong words, but can we really expect change? History doesn't fill me with hope. Successive UK prime ministers have made bold statements and taken steps to address late payments, with frankly limited impact:

Gordon Brown introduced the Prompt Payment Code to encourage timely payments, though it was voluntary.

David Cameron pushed for transparency and laid the groundwork for the Small Business Commissioner. This included the Duty to Report on late payments.

Theresa May formally established the Commissioner in 2017, aiming to mediate disputes.

Rishi Sunak explored tighter rules but stopped short of major changes. He did introduce the concept of extending the Duty to Report to cover value (not just volume) of payments, which was implemented by the new Labour Government in 2024.

The cumulative effect of these actions can be seen in the latest Build UK Payment Performance Table¹. This was updated in August to include data on the value of invoices paid within 60 days for the first time. It isn't a full set of data yet, but it makes for grim reading.

On average 16% of invoices are not paid on time. Three house builders top the league for highest percentage of invoices not paid within terms: Countryside Property (53%), Vistry Homes (47%), and Crest Nicholson (39%). Withheld payments (categorised late and disputed) from the two where the information is available (Countryside and Vistry) equates to an eye-watering £0.52 billion.

This is scandalous. It impacts viability, productivity, and the supply chain's ability to invest, take on apprentices, and plan for the future. How can an industry modernise when it is starved of the most vital commodity: cash and people? How can our culture improve when every day is a dog fight just to get paid, when resentment builds because deals have to be done just to get what you are owed? Beyond the business case, this isn't just crippling the industry, it is destroying lives.

Kier Starmer's consultation comes at a pivotal time. If this Government is serious about unlocking the power of construction to support growth and deliver the 1.5 million homes, change is essential.

On the surface, the key reforms proposed closely mirror what FIS set out in our Manifesto: A Blueprint for Better Construction last year. These include a mandatory 60-day maximum payment term, reducing to 45 days within five years, automatic statutory interest on

overdue invoices, and financial penalties for persistent offenders. Large companies would be required to report payment performance in their annual reports, with board-level oversight, increasing transparency and exposing practices such as paying late to flatter balance sheets at reporting periods.

In a move akin to Swedish regulation, The Small Business Commissioner will gain enhanced powers to enforce compliance.

Notably for construction the great retention debate has been raised again. Whilst the consultation does talk about prohibiting retention clauses entirely, it also outlines alternative options more akin to the New Zealand model that would require withheld money be safeguarded, for example by placing it in a trust or escrow account. This approach would go a long way to prevent loss due to upstream insolvency or delayed release, especially if combined with automatic release clauses.

FIS is actively engaged with the Department for Business, the Construction Leadership Council, and other specialist trade bodies, and will be feeding into the consultation. But I encourage everyone reading this to have their say - loudly and clearly.

While this debate has resurfaced under each new regimes, this is the most significant attempt we have seen from Government to drive real change. We have heard it all before, but this time it is crucial, and your views need to be heard.

The consultation is open until 23 October, inviting feedback from all business sectors. You can have your say by visiting:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/late-payments-tackling-poor-payment-practices

FIS is working with specialist trade bodies, the University of Reading and Barbour ABI to look closely at procurement, contracts and payment in the low and mid-rise housing sector - the report will be published in Q4. We welcome your thoughts on this important topic - please share your views by visiting:

<https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90867308/Tendering-Procurement-and-Contracts-in-the-House-Building-Sector>

Source

1. <https://builduk.org/information/payment-performance-construction-sector/>

Welcome

SPEC FINISH

CONTACT US

EDITORIAL

Editor:

David Crowson

Email:

david.crowson@warnersgroup.co.uk

SpecFinish

Warners Group Publications

West Street

Bourne

Lincs PE10 9PH

ADVERTISING

Advertising enquiries:

Theresa Geeson

Email:

theresag@warnersgroup.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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FIS

FIS

Tel: 0121 707 0077

www.thefis.org

Email: info@thefis.org

FIS, Unit 4, Olton Bridge

245 Warwick Rd

Solihull, West Midlands

B92 7AH

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Celebrating excellence at the 2025

FIS Scottish Awards

SpecFinish magazine wrapper

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WELCOME

TO THE OCTOBER ISSUE OF SPECFINISH

As summer draws to a close, I hope you have had time to enjoy some family moments, recharge, reflect, and make the most of the longer days. With autumn now upon us, it is a great opportunity to refocus, reset, and look ahead to what the rest of the year holds.

With most of my family either working in education or starting Year 10, and as someone who coaches 14 to 16-year-olds in rugby, the conversation towards the end of August often turns to the careers they aspire to. I am sometimes surprised by their choices, but always realistically supportive. I also take pride in sharing the wide range of opportunities our sector offers - from inspiring success stories, such as those on page 8, where you will find excellent examples of three rising stars who have taken different routes into the industry, from apprenticeships to career changes — all of which can lead to success, lifelong skills, and the potential for a rewarding career.

In this issue we also hear from friends of FIS, Ashley Beighton and Len Bunton, who discuss how conflict in construction can seem inevitable — but collaboration, built on behavioural awareness as much as technical skill, can prevent it. Read more on page 12.

On page 26, we feature a compelling discussion on why industrial acoustics are often overlooked, despite the significant impact of noise on worker health and performance. A recent case study highlights how targeted acoustic improvements can make a real difference.

Please let us know about your projects and company news as we do like to feature members as much as we can. No project too small... david.crowson@warnersgroup.co.uk

www.thefis.org



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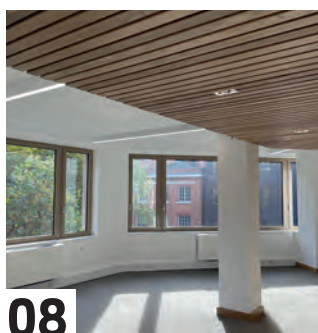
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EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS



Beena Nana
Head of Skills and Training, FIS



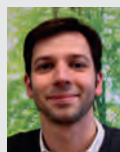
Louise Stewart
Founder and CEO at ProjectPay



Nick Tagliarini
Director at Pexhurst



Vasilis Ilias
Co-founder and CEO at Copay



James Parlour
Head of Technical, FIS



Jarvey Moss
Chief Executive Officer at Saible



Nigel Morrey
Technical Director at Siniat



Jack Smith
UK Commercial Manager at Earlytrade



Ashley Beighton
Managing Director at Teal Ventures



Will Hunnam
Managing Director at Forza Doors



Len Bunton
President of the Conflict Avoidance Coalition



Pascal van Dort
Global Acoustics Ambassador at Rockfon



Michelle Johnson
Head of Membership, FIS



Dr Stephen Hamil
Innovation Director at NBS (part of Hubexo)



The Pattern Shop
in Newcastle

Cundall takes home Building Acoustics Award

At the Association of Noise Consultants (ANC) Conference and Awards, Cundall won the Building Acoustics Award for its work on The Pattern Shop in Newcastle.

Andrew Parkin, Partner, Acoustics at Cundall, said: "We are delighted to win this award for our highly complex heritage project. This Grade II listed building has been sensitively restored and adapted into a community-oriented office space. The project required bespoke acoustic design solutions due to its proximity to

the well-known Boiler Shop concert venue in Newcastle, including high-performance sound insulation systems compatible with heritage construction.

"The awards promote and recognise excellence among UK acoustic consultants and highlight work that demonstrates innovation and originality in acoustic design or project approach."

To read more about this project visit:
www.cundall.com/projects/the-pattern-shop

Government updates guidance on fire door requirements

The Government has updated its guidance under the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, clarifying expectations around fire doors in residential and multi-occupied buildings.

The revised guidance reinforces that fire doors do not necessarily need to be replaced if they met the requirements of Building Regulations at the time of installation and have since been appropriately inspected and maintained.

This update is intended to provide reassurance for building owners, managers, and residents, while underlining the importance of regular checks to ensure that fire doors remain in good working order.

Compliance is not just about product selection, but also about inspection, maintenance and record-keeping. Routine checks should be carried out in line with the regulations, and residents provided with clear information on the role of fire doors in maintaining building safety.

To read the guidance in full visit:
<https://tinyurl.com/5n7yt8ea>

Celebrating excellence at the 2025 FIS Scottish Awards

FIS has unveiled the winners of the 2025 FIS Scottish Awards, which celebrate the exceptional work and diverse range of projects carried out across Scotland. On 12 September, the winners were announced in front of a full house at the voco Grand Central Glasgow during the Scottish Awards Lunch. The event was generously sponsored by Knauf and hosted by former professional referee John Rowbotham.

Linear Projects picked up the Gold Award in the Specialist Installation category for its project at the W Hotel

in Edinburgh, with Indeglas scooping the Silver award for its installation at the Haymarket Buildings in Edinburgh.

The Gold award in the Interior Fit-Out category went to MPACT Group for its installation at Virgin Money in Glasgow and Silver was awarded to Clansman Interiors for its fit-out at Future Beauty Labs in Glasgow.

MPACT Group won the overall Project of the Year award with judges praising their commitment to the industry in delivering a highly professional project that reflects meticulous planning and execution across all technical and creative aspects.

This year, two Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented. The first went to Mike McLaughlin, former Managing Director of Roskel Contracts. Mike was nominated by his colleague Ricky Spinelli, also of Roskel Contracts, who sadly passed away before the award was announced. The judges felt it was only fitting that Ricky should also be recognised posthumously for his outstanding contribution to the Scottish construction sector.

Read all about the winners at:
www.thefis.org/scottish-awards-winners



The MPACT Group team receiving their Project of the Year award.



MPACT Group Virgin Money project in Glasgow

FIS expresses concern at CITB funding changes

CITB recently announced a number of changes aimed at streamlining its approach to help levy-registered employers' access financial support for training.



One change which FIS has highlighted as a concern is the Skills and Training Fund, which closed on 30 September being replaced with Employer Networks as the sole route for business development funding. CITB claims that this shift is intended to reduce confusion caused by overlapping schemes and improve efficiency. However, FIS is concerned that the withdrawal of the Skills and Training Fund removes a valuable funding route that many of its members have been using successfully and has been delivering clear benefits.

FIS Head of Skills, Beena Nana said: "For a membership that largely voted against the most recent levy order, primarily due to concerns around the structure of the levy and how the makeup of our workforce affects both what members contribute and what they are able to claim, this will feel like a real kick in the teeth. We acknowledge the need to change and simplify the need to claim, but the decision to cut the Skills and Training Fund and giving businesses just over a month's notice is short-sighted and only reinforces concerns that CITB is out of touch with the employers it is meant to support."

To read the full set of changes including the Skills and Training Fund, Industry Accreditation uplift, "Suggest a course" initiative and new short qualification grant tier visit: www.thefis.org/2025/08/22/fis-expresses-concern-at-citb-funding-changes

Construction launches skills mission at leaders meeting

Senior leaders from across construction and Government Ministers have launched the construction sector skills mission, to ensure the sector has the workforce it needs to deliver.

The Construction Skills Mission Board have met, to set a strategy for recruiting an additional 100,000 workers a year by the end of the Parliament.

The Board was established by the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) to support the Government's commitment to invest an additional £625 million in construction skills. To support delivery of this strategy, the government is funding at least £725 billion for infrastructure over the next decade, as well as building 1.5m new homes, and retrofitting an additional five million homes.

The Board will develop specific initiatives and actions to deliver the mission, while supporting the Government to shape, develop and deliver skills policy. The actions will focus on five key areas to drive increased recruitment. They are:

- confidence to employ and invest;
- clear new entrant pathways;
- access to provision and support to train;
- funding that works; and
- reliable and rewarding careers.

The Board will work with industry bodies to ensure these actions are rolled out across the sector.

To read the story in full visit: www.specfinish.co.uk/construction-launches-skills-mission-at-leaders-meeting



PEOPLE IN BRIEF

BW: Workplace Experts appoint Miranda Samson as Head of Sustainability

Miranda has been instrumental in shaping BW: Workplace Experts sustainability strategy, with a strong emphasis on whole-life carbon, circularity, and delivering measurable real-world performance. Her new role reflects the company's deepening commitment to embedding low-carbon thinking across every stage of design and delivery.

As the team continues to grow, Miranda will lead the next phase of sustainability work — supporting clients and consultants in navigating evolving standards and driving meaningful progress towards net zero.

www.wearebw.com



SIMONSWERK UK strengthens sales leadership with new appointment

SIMONSWERK UK announced the appointment of Andrew Kite as Head of Sales.

The appointment represents a strategic move to strengthen the company's presence in the UK market as it continues to expand its premium door hardware solutions.

His responsibilities will include developing strategic partnerships, expanding the customer base, and ensuring the company's premium product range reaches new market segments.

www.simonswerk.co.uk



CCF announce new Managing Director

CCF announced Chris Knight has become their new Managing Director.

A CCF spokesperson said: "With more than 17 years at CCF, Chris has progressed through the business, from Branch Manager to Regional Sales Director.

"His deep understanding and knowledge of our people, customers, and operations means he's ready to hit the ground running as he leads us into our next chapter.

"We are looking forward to the exciting opportunities ahead under Chris's leadership and look forward to continued success."

www.ccftld.co.uk



The sad passing of Ciaran Kelly

SIG has announced with great sadness the passing of Ciaran Kelly, Commercial Director for their Distribution business.

Kevin Windle, Managing Director at SIG Ireland, said: "Ciaran was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last August, and despite a very brave battle against this terrible disease, he passed away at the Curragh Hospice, surrounded by his family.

"He will be deeply missed by all his friends and colleagues at SIG. "Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this time."



FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: THREE JOURNEYS INTO CONSTRUCTION

There is no single path into the construction industry. **Beena Nana**, FIS Head of Skills and Training, spoke to **Nick Tagliarini**, Director at Pexhurst, to learn about three rising stars, and how different routes, from apprenticeships to career changes, can all lead to success.



Beena Nana, FIS Head of Skills and Training



Nick Tagliarini, Director at Pexhurst

From curiosity to leadership

Dan knew from an early age that he wanted to work in the construction industry. His interest was initially sparked by early experiences helping with his family's home extensions and labouring for family friends. He also assisted his uncle, as a labourer, which gave him further hands-on exposure and helped cement his decision to pursue a career in the industry.

He joined the ranks at Pexhurst straight after sixth form, having turned down a university place in favour of an apprenticeship. His A-levels in Geography, Business and Product Design showed a natural interest in how things work, but it was that early practical experience which ultimately drew him into construction.

After speaking with me, Dan applied to Pexhurst's apprenticeship scheme and was offered a place. He studied part time and completed a HNC and an NVQ Level 4 in site supervision. After two years, he progressed to a degree apprenticeship, undertaking a BSc at the University of Hertfordshire, while continuing to learn on the job.

Dan began his career as a trainee construction manager on site, shadowing senior colleagues and learning how to plan and deliver projects, then moving into the office into a contracts/commercial manager role. He now holds a senior position, managing complex projects with tight deadlines and strict budgets.

"The biggest challenge," said Dan, "is managing all the people involved. You're dealing with everyone from subcontractors to clients and design teams. How you speak to people really matters. You've got to talk to them how you'd want to be spoken to."



Daniel Beadle, Senior Contracts/Commercial Manager

Among his proudest moments is being part of the team who delivered the company's largest ever project in Bristol, as well as completing a high-end industrial refurbishment in Orpington. He also worked on a major office refurbishment project at 2 London Bridge, which stands out because of its iconic location and the complexity of coordinating multiple teams in an occupied high-profile building. This was even more challenging due to the timing during the Covid-19 lockdown, when much of London was deserted and strict health and safety protocols were in place.

Dan is now focused on further progression and supporting others coming into the business, and as part of Pexhurst's junior board he shares insight on operational improvements and shaping company culture. "You don't need a specific qualification or background to get started," he said. "Set goals and stick to them. You can work your way up – there's no single path."

His day-to-day work involves planning and overseeing live sites, managing programmes and timelines, and keeping projects within budget.

His advice for young professionals looking to break into the industry is simple: "If you're starting out on site, don't be put off by the early mornings and hard graft - it doesn't have to be like that forever. There are so many different opportunities across construction, there really is something for everyone. Passion, drive and enthusiasm will take you a long way."

The construction industry is evolving faster, smarter, and more inclusive than ever before. At the heart of this change is a growing recognition that talent doesn't come in just one form or follow a single path.

At Pexhurst, the most successful teams have been built on diversity, not just of background, but of experience, perspective, and ambition. As a business they are about offering different ways into the industry, whether individuals are joining as apprentices, switching careers, fresh out of university, or learning on the job.

In their work as a fit-out and refurbishment main contractor, they operate in fast-paced, highly collaborative environments where adaptability and problem-solving are essential. They seek individuals who are curious, driven, and eager to grow.

The three personal journeys that Nick shares with us — those of rising stars **Daniel Beadle**, **Jacob Palmer**, and **Ashley Williams**, show that the construction industry is full of opportunity for those willing to take the first step. Whether you're starting out straight from school, shifting from another sector, or working your way up through experience, there's plenty of room to build a meaningful and successful career.

2 London Bridge, a major office refurbishment project





Jacob's first BREEAM outstanding project - a major refurbishment in Greenford



*Jacob (Jake) Palmer,
Site Manager*

Learning on the job: A journey from Site Support to Site Manager

Like many school leavers, Jake was unsure of his next steps. But with his dad already working at Pexhurst, Jake started

helping on site as a Labourer during holidays and school breaks. That hands-on exposure sparked an interest in how things came together on a site, and after finishing school, he was offered a Trainee Site Manager role on the Pexhurst Apprenticeship Programme.

"With little experience, I just threw myself into it," he said. "I was learning every day on site. At first, I didn't know anything, but Pexhurst gave me the space to grow."

Jake spent his early years shadowing experienced managers on a variety of projects - from commercial office fit-outs in central London to large-scale warehouse refurbishments. Watching a project evolve from a stripped-out shell to a fully finished space gave him a deep sense of satisfaction. "Every project taught me something new," he said. "That's the beauty of it. You're always learning."

As his confidence and skill set grew, so did his responsibilities. Jake completed a Level 3 team leader and supervisor apprenticeship, helping him step up into Assistant Site Manager roles. He's now studying for a Level 5 operational management qualification and a Level 6 NVQ in site management, preparing him to lead more complex projects.

"Each day is different and you never know what's coming," he said. "That's what makes

it rewarding. The more projects you do, the more confident you become."

His proudest moment to date was delivering his first BREEAM outstanding project - a major refurbishment in Greenford with tight deadlines and multiple stakeholders. Soon after, he was shortlisted for Apprentice of the Year at the National Building and Construction Awards 2023 - taking home the silver prize. "That was a big confidence boost," he said.

Jake believes clear communication and teamwork are key to project success. "Asking for help isn't a weakness," he said. "You can't do everything on your own, and you don't have to."

Today, Jake's responsibilities include overseeing health and safety, managing subcontractors, liaising with architects and consultants, and monitoring timelines and materials. "There's always something going on," he said. "That's what keeps it interesting."

Jake acknowledges the construction industry keeps you on your toes but is one of the most rewarding sectors to be in. His advice to anyone starting out or looking to progress is simple: "Stay keen, be willing to learn and never stop asking questions," he said. "All information is valuable - even the things you think might be silly. Give it your all, stay persistent and lean on your peers when you need support."



*Ashley Williams,
Senior Contracts/
Commercial
Manager*

From sports cars to Senior Contracts/Commercial Manager: A bold career shift

Ashley's journey into construction didn't follow the traditional route. He started in the automotive industry, training as a mechanic

on high-end sports cars. "I realised I needed a job that challenged me in different ways every day. Something fast-paced, where you have to think on your feet," he said.

That realisation led him to switch direction. He enrolled on a multi-trade construction course at college, where he discovered a passion. "I enjoyed the buzz of it all," he said. "The idea that no two days were the same really appealed to me."

After finishing his course, Ashley joined Pexhurst as a Trainee Site Manager and quickly proved himself ambitious and eager to learn. Since then, he's progressed through several roles, adding, "It's been a whirlwind, but I've loved every minute."



Pexhurst fully refurbished and modernised this commercial property near Buckingham Palace

Alongside his practical experience, Ashley has steadily worked through various qualifications. He's completed NVQs at levels 4 to 7 and is working towards gaining MCIQB status. He has also completed short courses in health and safety, site supervision and project management. "The qualifications matter," he said, "but what you do with them

matters more. You've got to apply what you've learnt in the real world."

One of the most defining moments of Ashley's career came just five months into his first role. "A colleague had to take emergency leave, and I was suddenly asked to take charge of a large refurbishment project," he said. "It was a huge challenge, but I made it work and that project gave me so much confidence." →



He's gone on to lead a range of high-profile jobs, including a prestigious fit-out near Buckingham Palace, completed during the Queen's funeral period. "That was surreal," he said. "The stakes were high, the site was sensitive and we had to deliver to a tight programme. It was a proud moment."

Ashley's current role spans both commercial and operational sides of project delivery. He works on financial planning, resource management, client communications and programme control. "There's a lot of spinning plates," he said. "But that's what I enjoy, solving problems and keeping everything moving."

He also plays an active role in mentoring younger colleagues and sits on Pexhurst's junior board. "We've got a group of people who started at a similar time and have worked our way up the business together," he said. "That shared experience really bonds you."

His advice for anyone entering the industry is simple: "Be curious. Even if it's not your job, try to understand it. If you can save someone five minutes by sharing knowledge – do it, it shows initiative and builds trust."

Looking ahead, Ashley is excited about his future at Pexhurst. "I want to keep learning, help others grow and maybe join the board of directors one day," he said. "There's still so much I want to do."

One company, many paths

Jake, Dan and Ashley all joined the industry in different ways. Their stories show that there's no single route into construction and no limit on where it can take you.

The flexibility and opportunities offered by businesses like Pexhurst are vital in strengthening the construction sector and the prospects of ambitious and talented young people.

www.pexhurst.co.uk

These stories remind us that construction is not just about building spaces; it's about building futures. Their unique journeys into the industry prove that when people are given the right tools, mentorship, and opportunities, they can achieve remarkable things.

Pexhurst has demonstrated that career growth is actively encouraged. Whether through formal qualifications, hands-on experience, or the support of colleagues and mentors, they believe in investing in people for the long term. Initiatives like their apprenticeship programme and junior board are especially important, serving as platforms that allow emerging talent to shine, contribute ideas, and help shape the future of their business.

There is no single blueprint for success in construction, and that's exactly what makes it such an exciting sector. With the right attitude, a commitment to learning, and a supportive team, the possibilities are endless.

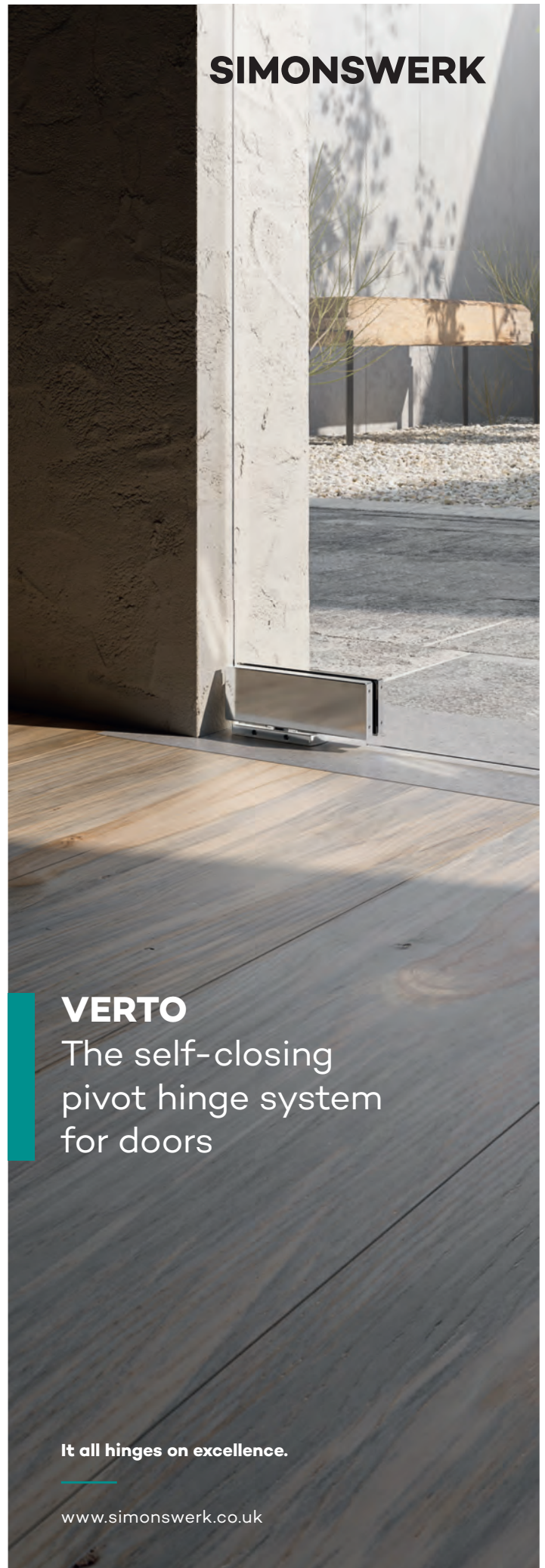
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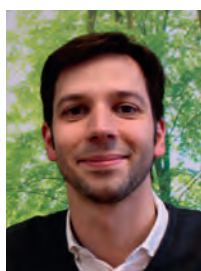
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www.simonswerk.co.uk



UNDERSTANDING SINIAT'S DECISION TO ACCEPT FORMAL DESIGN RESPONSIBILITY

A recent announcement from Siniat, stating that it will formally take design responsibility for the system information and standard details it issues¹, marks a significant shift in accountability for construction risk and specification. **James Parlour**, FIS Head of Technical, sought to learn more about this bold step from **Nigel Morrey**, Technical Director at Siniat.



James Parlour, Head of Technical



Nigel Morrey, Technical Director at Siniat

This is an important development in building a robust design development process the drylining sector urgently needs, and we hope manufacturers continue to engage proactively.

However, this does not replace or remove the requirement for a competent design engineer to coordinate the design of drylining systems with the structure, interfaces and penetrations — areas that lack test methods and remain outside the manufacturer's remit.

It is also crucial to consider during the design process how the greater "interior system," comprising these interfacing elements, will maintain performance in service when subjected to the imposed loads that come with movement of buildings. While this includes deflection, building movement also creates inter-storey drift and rotation, as well as service loads such as horizontal traffic loads. All of these factors must be addressed in both the cold state and the fire state. Achieving this level of performance is not possible through the efforts of any single party in the supply chain; it requires collaboration at all levels and a design process with clearly defined responsibilities established from the earliest stages.

When speaking to Nigel he provided a greater insight to why Siniat made this bold step, what makes this offering different from warranties currently available, and what parts of the construction are covered by Siniat's Design Solution. Here is what he had to say.

Why has Siniat made this bold step?

Firstly, because it's the right thing to do. Secondly, because it was something the market was asking for, and that we felt we were in the right position (with our technical offering and our competence journey) to provide. We are looking to lead the market for construction manufacturers and accept that we have a level of responsibility and accountability in the design process.

What makes this offering different from warranties currently out there?

This is not a warranty – we, and many other manufacturers, have offered warranties on our systems for some time. Typically, warranties are more about the product and not the system performance. This is us taking legal responsibility for the design of our systems we recommend – if the design is found to be at fault, the claim is made against us and is covered by our Professional Liability insurance cover.

What parts of the construction are covered by Siniat's design solution?

Build ups for drywall systems as prescribed in Siniat standard and project specific details.

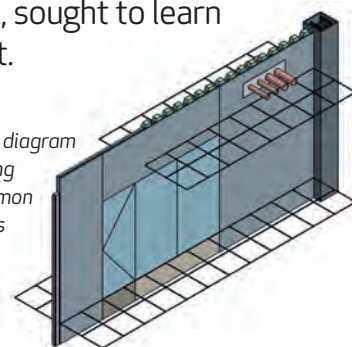
How does the process work from a contractual perspective? Who is Siniat contracted to?

This is where I think there has been a misunderstanding – we aren't offering this as a paid service, or a contractual one – we aren't opening a design arm. We are offering a level of technical support that would be legally considered as an unpaid design service and we have the appropriate professional liability cover in place to cover these activities.

Will Siniat be looking at installations to support the rigour of the cover offered?

Only design is covered – if the Siniat details are not correctly installed by the

Isometric diagram of drylining with common interfaces



sub-contractor/dryliner, then the Principal/Main Contractor is at fault. Principal/Main Contractors maintain responsibility for ensuring that those carrying out work are competent to do so and should conduct the necessary checks before (for installer competence), during, and after the build to ensure it has been installed as required. Principal/Main Contractors should also take the necessary steps to ensure that their staff are competent and familiar with how to identify compliant vs non-compliant installations. Manufacturers should offer instructions on installation and support to site staff (and training including toolbox talks where required). This is an important question to ask and the construction industry should have plans to address it, but compliance all starts at design.

Who should engage with Siniat to ensure that this cover is in place?

Again, think this may be a misconception related to PI (Professional Indemnity) cover. Etex Building Performance Limited (Siniat) maintain the necessary professional liability insurance cover for our operations. If evidence of cover is required or in the event of a potential claim, contact should be made with Etex Building Performance Limited and we would advise accordingly.

www.etexgroup.com/en

Source

1. <https://specfinish.co.uk/siniat-takes-industry-leading-step-to-accept-formal-design-responsibility/>

THE POWER OF COLLABORATION: AVOIDING CONFLICT THROUGH BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHT

Ashley Beighton MCIOB, Managing Director at Teal Ventures, discusses with **David Crowson**, Editor, how conflict in construction seems inevitable, but collaboration can prevent it. Success relies on behavioural awareness, not just technical skills.



Ashley Beighton
MCIOB, Managing
Director at
Teal Ventures

behaviours serve not just as conflict resolution tools, but as proactive strategies to prevent disputes altogether.

"Construction is a complex business, and conflict has often been viewed as an inevitable by-product of operating in such a high stakes environment. However, this need not be the case. There is a different narrative – one where collaborative

"At the heart of this approach is the recognition that technical expertise, whilst essential, is not sufficient on its own to ensure project success. Human dynamics – how people behave, communicate, and engage with one another – can be equally decisive. The root of many conflicts doesn't lie in poor planning or design flaws, but in misaligned expectations, breakdowns in communication, and an absence of trust. These are not engineering problems; they are behavioural ones," said Ashley.

Collaboration: A behaviour, not just a buzzword

Ashley explained that collaboration is often spoken about in contractual terms –

alliances, partnerships, or joint ventures. But the real work of collaboration happens at a human level. It's about how individuals behave in meetings, respond under pressure, and navigate competing priorities. He said: "Collaborative behaviours go beyond simply agreeing to work together. They require a willingness to listen, to adapt, to be open to others' perspectives, and to make decisions that serve the collective good."

"The behavioural science underpinning this approach has now been distilled into practical frameworks, such as the NEC suite of contracts and the RICS Conflict Avoidance Process (CAP), which encourage organisations to approach projects with a collaborative mindset. But translating aspiration into action demands that individuals – at all levels – develop the self-awareness and interpersonal skills to engage constructively."



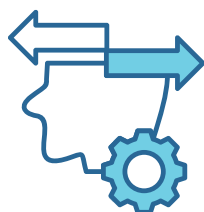
PROMISE



CONCLUSION



COMPETENCE



BEHAVIOR



TRUST



SUCCESS

Behavioural drivers of conflict

Ashley explained that his research suggests the root cause of conflict in about half of construction projects can be traced back to poor interpersonal behaviours. These include siloed thinking, a blame culture, and an over-reliance on positional power. He said: "Such behaviours erode trust and stifle innovation. Left unchecked, they create an environment where small misunderstandings escalate, and collaboration becomes increasingly difficult. "For example, a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities often leads to assumptions, gaps and duplication. When things don't go to plan – as inevitably happens in construction projects – this ambiguity fuels finger-pointing rather than problem-solving. In contrast, environments that promote psychological safety and mutual accountability tend to resolve issues more efficiently and avoid the escalation that leads to formal disputes."

Collaborative behaviours in practice

David asked Ashley: "So, what does collaboration look like in behavioural terms?"

Ashley said: "It starts with active listening – truly hearing what others are saying, rather than just waiting for your turn to speak. It involves asking open questions, showing empathy, and being willing to adjust your position in light of new information. It's about building rapport, even when you disagree."

"Collaborative behaviours also require curiosity and humility – the readiness to admit what you don't know, and to seek input from others with different expertise. This creates a culture of shared learning and continuous improvement, which is especially valuable in environments like construction where innovation and adaptability are key."

"Importantly, collaborative behaviours must be modelled by leadership – including clients and main contractors. When senior figures demonstrate openness, transparency and respect, it sets the tone for the wider team. Conversely, when leaders tolerate or engage in adversarial behaviour, it becomes normalised, and conflict becomes more likely."

Creating a culture of collaboration

Ashley said: "Developing collaborative behaviours is not a one-off training exercise; it actually requires a sustained effort to shift organisational culture. This begins with recruitment and onboarding, where values-based hiring can ensure that individuals are aligned on both skills and mindset. It continues through performance management, where collaborative behaviours should be recognised and rewarded, not sidelined in favour of technical outcomes alone."

"There are some great tools such as 360-degree feedback, coaching, and behavioural assessments that can help individuals and teams develop greater self-awareness. When people understand their own conflict triggers and communication styles, they are better equipped to manage differences constructively."

"Crucially, collaboration must be supported by systems and processes that enable it. This includes structured communication forums, clear decision-making protocols, and mechanisms for early conflict resolution, such as CAP. These structures create a safety net that prevents issues from festering and encourages resolution before formal disputes arise."

The 'next steps' approach to meetings

Ashley explained a simple yet powerful strategy for making meetings more purposeful and results-driven: the 'next steps' approach.

The approach ensures every meeting ends with clearly agreed actions, ownership, and deadlines. To maximise its value, this approach should also include attention to meeting dynamics at the beginning and end – specifically, checking for unspoken agenda items at the start and ensuring everyone has had their say before the meeting closes.

Meetings often go off track when hidden concerns surface partway through. To avoid this, the person leading the meeting should begin by reviewing the agenda and then asking, "Are there any other topics we need to be aware of that aren't listed here?" This brief check-in allows participants to raise legitimate concerns early, reducing the risk of the agenda being hijacked later on. This also builds trust and inclusivity, as people feel their priorities are being acknowledged.

Once the final agenda is agreed, the meeting can proceed. Throughout the discussion, decisions and actions should be captured, preferably where everyone can see them – don't be afraid to use a flipchart or whiteboard, and to stick the flipchart paper on the meeting room walls if several sheets are needed.

In the last five to ten minutes, the group should formally review the decisions and actions that have been captured and together decide:

- That the list of items is complete
- Who is responsible for each action
- When each action is due

These 'next steps' should then be shared promptly after the meeting, ideally in a simple action log. This turns discussion into immediate

action and provides clarity for all the participants.

Before wrapping up, the person leading the meeting should take one final step that often gets overlooked: checking whether everyone has had a chance to contribute and have their say. It's easy for meetings to be dominated by a few confident voices, while quieter team members may leave feeling unheard. A quick prompt – such as, "Before we close, is there anyone who hasn't had a chance to speak or would like to add something?" – can dramatically improve engagement and surface valuable insights.

Starting and ending in this way reinforces the power of the 'next steps' approach by ensuring meetings are not only action-oriented but also inclusive and fair. They help avoid the frustration of unspoken issues emerging too late and make space for diverse perspectives to shape the outcome.

The benefits of this model are substantial. It builds accountability by clearly assigning tasks. It enhances clarity by turning vague conversations into precise commitments. It also improves follow-up, as actions can be tracked in future meetings. It can even be used as a simple way to track resource allocation – if actions aren't getting cleared then it may be because there's insufficient time or resource being committed to the project.

Over time, this approach builds a culture of ownership and trust, where meetings are seen as effective tools for progress, not just as time-wasting rituals.

In summary, the 'next steps' approach creates structured, effective, and inclusive meetings. It ensures nothing important is missed, no one is overlooked, and everyone leaves knowing exactly what needs to be done and when.

The payoff: Projects that deliver

Ashley explained that the benefits of embedding collaborative behaviours extend far beyond conflict avoidance. He said: "Teams that work well together tend to be more innovative, resilient, and productive. They are better at managing risk, adapting to change, and delivering value for money."

"In an era of increasing scrutiny and constrained resources, the ability to avoid conflict is not just a soft skill – it's a strategic advantage. When collaboration becomes the default, rather than the exception, projects are more likely to be delivered on time, on budget, and with outcomes that serve all stakeholders."

A final thought

Ashley concluded by saying: "Changes and the odd disagreement in construction projects may be inevitable – but damaging disputes are not. By focusing on behaviours that support collaboration, organisations can create environments where people feel heard, respected, and empowered to work together toward common goals. In doing so, they move from managing conflict to preventing it – and ultimately, to delivering better outcomes for everyone involved"

<https://tealventures.com/>



Len Bunton,
President of the
Conflict Avoidance
Coalition

Len Bunton, President of the Conflict Avoidance Coalition (CAC), provided his thoughts on the subject. Len explained that everywhere he turns at the moment, all he hears is the emphasis on the need for more collaboration in the

industry, and Ashley is perfectly correct that collaboration is not a buzzword – it is about behaviour and conduct. He said: “There is no doubt that the industry needs to improve the way it manages relationships with clients and across the supply chain, and the introduction of favourable and equitable conduct is essential if the industry is going to survive.

“In my experience of dealing with a significant number of construction disputes, particularly those involving payment and

cash flow issues – many people in the industry are not good listeners. They are often unwilling to sit quietly, absorb, and genuinely consider what someone else is telling them, for example, about difficulties they are experiencing on a construction contract that is not their responsibility, but are nonetheless causing problems and, inevitably, serious financial consequences.

“To my mind, the most positive aspect of the Conflict Avoidance Process (CAP) is early intervention to prevent issues from escalating into costly and time-consuming construction disputes. Has anyone ever stopped to consider the enormous cost these disputes impose on our industry – often involving consultants and legal advisers, and inevitably dismantling long-standing relationships? The last thing the industry needs is more construction disputes. The money being wasted could and should be redirected toward increasing the number of construction projects across the United Kingdom.

“Conflict avoidance is all about understanding what the problem is, how

it has arisen, and working collectively and collaboratively to find a solution that suits everyone. It may not be perfect, but collaboration allows the issues causing friction to be resolved and put to bed – enabling everyone involved to refocus on completing the construction project.

“So, my message is this: Commit today to signing the Conflict Avoidance Pledge, which can be found at conflictavoidance.org. Embed conflict avoidance procedures into your day-to-day business model, encourage your clients to support the process, and share the concept with your supply chain.”

Len concluded by saying: “The CAC has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career, having spent over 45 years in the industry. It has brought together more than 100 organisations, all working collectively and collaboratively to drive disputes out of the industry and focus on finding resolutions.

Now is the time for the UK construction industry to stop talking and start delivering real change.”

<https://cac-uk.org/>

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FIS AGM/Regional Meeting

Hill Dickinson, The Broadgate Tower, London
16 October

FIS Training Awards Lunch

Plasterers Hall, One London Wall, London
25 November



Wayne Chappelow, Leeds College of Building was the Life-time achievement winner at the 2024 FIS Training Awards Lunch

FIS Conference at Workspace Design Show

Business Design Centre, London
25-26 February 2026

For further information of these events visit: www.thefis.org/events

MODERNISING CONSTRUCTION PAYMENTS

Michelle Johnson, Head of Membership at FIS, spoke to four companies that provide modern fintech solutions to discuss their payment solutions, benefits for supply chain contractors, and their thoughts on the future of industry payments and project bank accounts (PBAs).



Michelle Johnson,
Head of
Membership at FIS

Since Sir Michael Latham's influential report, "Constructing the Team", advocated for PBAs to limit payment abuse, they have been central to discussions to reform construction's payment culture. In 2011, UK government formally supported PBAs, setting targets for their implementation on public sector contracts. In Wales

and Scotland, PBAs are now a mandatory consideration on public sector contracts over £2 million, and the Construction Playbook demands use "unless there are compelling reasons not to".

Despite this support, adoption of PBAs has been slow and divisive, with some complaining that they add cost and bureaucracy to projects and remove vital liquidity in the supply chain.

The transparency they offer has not always been beneficial, especially in an aggressive procurement culture where trust is scarce. This debate intensified recently when it emerged that a collective of companies, supported by FIS, initiated legal proceedings against the Ministry of Justice over the failure of PBAs associated with ISG to provide the expected level of protection to subcontractors. At the same time, the Cabinet Office withdrew its guidance on PBAs.

FIS has advocated a need for a greater emphasis on transparency and speed of payments through the supply chain, emphasising that PBAs and digital payment tools are critical to achieving this. Ultimately, digitalisation should enhance the benefits of PBAs, and the FinTech space is now alert to this opportunity. This article explores the PBA and digital payment landscape from the perspective of the FinTech sector.

This is what **Vasilis Ilias**, Co-founder and CEO at Copay, **Jarvey Moss** Chief Executive Officer at Saible, **Louise Stewart**, Founder and CEO at ProjectPay and, **Jack Smith**, UK Commercial Manager at Early trade had to say.

Vasilis Ilias explained that Copay is the first on-demand payment platform built specifically for construction. We integrate with the payment systems of main contractors and give subcontractors real-time visibility into all their approved invoices.

He said: "On top of that, subcontractors can choose to get paid early — if and when they want — by offering a small discount.

"As a result, subcontractors get access to lower cost of funding than they might receive otherwise, while harnessing working capital to invest in growth and innovation. Main contractors save money, subcontractors get fast cashflow, and that's not just a win-win for main contractors and subcontractors, but for the whole supply chain and the wider economy. Projects keep moving, supply chain invests in growth, and the industry stays strong."

Michelle said: "That sounds like a game-changer for subcontractors, what are the key advantages for them in the supply chain?"

For subcontractors in the supply chain, Copay offers payment visibility and flexible, on-demand access to their money, improving working capital and reducing reliance on costly invoice financing or borrowing. In short, we replace uncertainty with choice. Subcontractors gain transparency, trust, and efficiency — critical in an industry where slow payments can derail entire projects, explained Vasilis.

"What's your view on the future of payments in construction — and where do you see PBAs fitting in?" asked Michelle.

Construction is one of the world's largest industries, yet when it comes to payments, it remains one of the most underserved. The tools and systems used in other sectors simply haven't been tailored to the complex, multi-tiered nature of construction supply chains, commented Vasilis.

He said: "I believe the future lies in digital-first, real-time solutions that allow



Vasilis Ilias, Co-founder and CEO at Copay

money to flow quickly and transparently, directly tied to project progress.

"As for PBAs, while they can improve security of funds, they are often rigid and administratively heavy. At the same time, main contractors seem too nervous to adopt them as they lose control of the money.

"I believe the future of payments in construction will combine the security principles of PBAs with the speed, flexibility, and visibility of modern fintech platforms like Copay — ensuring everyone in the supply chain gets paid fairly, quickly, and with minimal friction."

Copay

www.usecopay.com



Jarvey Moss, Chief Executive Officer at Saible

Jarvey Moss started by explaining how Saible's Digital Parallel Payment Accounts (DiPPAs) works. DiPPAs are an evolution of the PBA concept, specifically designed to build on the benefits and overcome the known limitations of PBAs.

Like a PBA, they include a dedicated, FCA regulated bank account for each project. Funds are ring fenced and protected by a legal trust. Unlike a conventional PBA, they are easy to open, with a standardised trust agreement. The entire supply chain accesses a simple app to authorise payments to one another from the DiPPA. Sensitive commercial data, such as individual

payment amounts, is only visible to those with the right to see it, we call this "intelligent transparency". Payment is made simultaneously, in parallel, so everyone is paid at the same time as the main contractor.

Michelle said: "That's a really interesting approach. What are the key advantages for contractors in the supply chain?"

Jarvey said: "There are three major advantages: certainty, protection, and efficiency.

"First, DiPPAs provide certainty of prompt payment, drastically minimising the financial stress associated with waiting for funds. This also includes retentions, which are held in the secure, ring-fenced account until the retention period ends.

"Second, they provide substantial protection from the impact of upstream insolvencies - project funds are held in trust and can be paid directly to beneficiaries in the event of an insolvency further up the supply chain. Although conventional PBAs are also designed to do this, there can be problems if the legal documents aren't tightly drafted, and if the bank account is held in the name of the insolvent company. DiPPAs use standardised legals and specialised bank accounts to overcome these issues.

"And, finally, since everyone gets paid together, it encourages a more collaborative project environment. There's less wasted time chasing payments, and with the client paying all fees, it is free for contractors to use.

"That level of protection and ease of use sounds like a big step forward. What's your perspective on the future of payments in construction — and the role of PBAs?", said Michelle.

"The reality is, our industry still has a major problem with payments", said Jarvey.

He continued by saying: "Until this is solved, we'll continue to see too many insolvencies, too much stress, and too little investment in training and innovation. The future of payments in our industry is digital, driven by the tools and infrastructure from the FinTech industry, where the UK is a world leader.

"In my opinion, PBAs were the best solution available before this new technology came on the scene. However, if not properly implemented, PBAs could fail to work as intended, as experienced by some FIS members in the wake of the ISG insolvency. DiPPAs are the future, specifically designed to build on the strengths, and address the weaknesses of PBAs."

He concluded by saying: "At Saible, we also believe that it should not cost the supply chain anything just to be paid on time. There is a place for invoice finance for short-term cash flow reasons, but solutions that rely on this mechanism are not a long-term answer."



<https://saible.co.uk/>



Louise Stewart, Founder and CEO at ProjectPay

As the former Chair of a Subcontractors Association, in my experience, subcontractors don't want credit or loans that expose them to increased risk and losses, forcing them into a never-ending debt trap, they can't escape. They want their payments to be fast and to be protected from insolvency losses. That is why I created a new way for

subcontractors to get paid with ProjectPay, which eliminates slow payments and insolvency losses, explained Louise Stewart.

Michelle asked Louise "What are the advantages to the supply chain in using your platform?"

Louise said: "ProjectPay is the only platform built for subcontractors, with other fintech platforms built to benefit large main contractors. The most important thing that ProjectPay does is eliminate the risk of insolvency losses caused by main contractor collapses. No fintech platform should operate in this sector without addressing this significant risk.

"The platform simplifies and streamlines the request and approval process across project supply chains, providing the required data to transact payments to subcontractors before main contractors or clients are required to pay, providing certainty and the cash flow needed embedded into the payment process without requiring loans or debt.

"The most significant barrier to addressing payment challenges in the

construction sector is speeding up the payment request and approval process with payments not transacted until applications for payments are approved. Payment Notices are required to be issued in response to an application for payment; however, the legislation in the UK on the prescribed time for these approvals is weak and ineffective.

"In my opinion this makes PBAs pointless, as they do not address this and encourage users to flaunt the law that forbids paid-when-paid in the sector. Yet, that is precisely what PBAs encourages. Once the client has paid funds into the PBA, everyone can get paid; likewise, if clients are late paying the PBA, everyone is paid late. Yet UK construction law does not allow subcontractors' payments to be conditional on payments from the client."

Louise went on to tell Michelle: "We've also seen PBAs' devastating failure to protect subcontractor payments from insolvency losses when ISG collapsed, with subcontractors left unpaid on UK government projects, despite being told that the PBA would protect them.

"The problem is that if the money has not yet been paid to the PBA, under insolvency laws, it forms part of the failed contractor's insolvency estate, with all unpaid amounts due from clients required to be paid to the insolvency administrators, who use the money to pay themselves and secured creditors.

"Other countries, having identified the shortcomings of PBAs (and their digital equivalents), are following the USA in enacting laws that establish an implied trust on funds belonging to subcontractors, protecting them from being diverted to a failed contractor's insolvency estate.

"What the sector does not need is more 'finance types' looking to make a quick buck by exploiting the desperation, pretending they have a solution. I have seen too many fintech platforms that are built to benefit main contractors by enabling them to exploit their supply chain, while pretending to benefit subcontractors.

"Subcontractors should not be forced to provide discounts when they have a contractual entitlement to be paid within the terms agreed, or prescribed by law, which on UK government projects is 30 days."

Louise commented: "With ProjectPay, subcontractors can register to be paid as soon as their application for payment is approved, interest-free, risk-free for a small fee, or they can wait until their payments are due and receive their payments for no cost, but with a new confidence, knowing that on ProjectPay their payments (and retentions) are protected from any insolvency losses.

"The success of the ProjectPay platform, demonstrated on public entity projects, shows that it can help small businesses working on government projects get paid faster and address their working capital shortfalls, interest-free, eliminating credit risk for them. It helps them escape the debt trap of paying high interest rates on traditional credit, loans, or factoring products they are forced to use while waiting for slow payments.

"ProjectPay is currently available to contractors working on public entity projects. It is not yet available to the private sector."

Louise concluded by saying: "The platform will soon offer interest-free materials purchasing to help contractors remove credit risk, manage project spend, and ease cash flow pressures — support that came too late for ISG subcontractors left with unreimbursed credit card debt."



www.projectpay.co.uk

Earlytrade is an early payment platform that enables main contractors to offer early payment opportunities to their supply chain while generating strong financial returns. The platform integrates with leading construction ERPs and payment systems, allowing suppliers to request early release of payment on approved invoices, explained Jack Smith.

"How does your platform work in practice, and what makes it different from traditional discounting schemes?" asked Michelle.

Jack said: "Unlike fixed discounting schemes, our platform uses an auction-style model. Suppliers choose if and when to offer a discount, invoice by invoice, in exchange for faster payment. Main contractors retain full control over their capital by selecting how much they would like to make available for early payment. Automated acceptance, based on MC-defined parameters and goals, makes it simple to operate at scale, without adding administrative burden to finance teams."

"We believe for main contractors, Earlytrade transforms working capital into a profit centre. By funding early payments from their own balance sheet, they can achieve returns four to five times higher than money market rates, while simultaneously strengthening supplier relationships and improving prompt payment statistics.

"The system is turnkey, with supplier onboarding and support handled, enabling rapid launch without increasing headcount."

Michelle then asked "What are the real advantages to suppliers in the construction supply chain?"

Jack replied: "For suppliers, the benefit is straightforward: faster access to cash. On average, suppliers using the platform in the UK are paid 28 days earlier than contracted terms. This improves cash flow stability, reduces reliance on expensive financing, and provides a choice rather than an obligation. Because the discounting is voluntary and auction-based, suppliers remain in control, selecting which invoices to accelerate according to their needs.

"The result is a supply chain that is financially healthier, more resilient, and better able to deliver projects on time and to quality standards."

Michelle's final question to Jack was: "What's your view of the future of payments for our industry, and of Project Bank Accounts (PBAs)?"

Jack said: "In my opinion the construction industry has long been held



Jack Smith, UK Commercial Manager at Earlytrade

back by outdated payment practices and rigid mechanisms such as PBAs.

"While designed with good intentions, these accounts tie up capital, create friction, and fail to deliver meaningful financial benefits for either party.

"The future lies in platforms such as ours that combine transparency, flexibility, and financial performance.

"Rather than locking funds away, main contractors can use our platform to unlock capital returns that outperform traditional investment options, while simultaneously protecting and strengthening their supply chain."

He concluded by saying: "We believe PBAs will increasingly be seen as a stop-gap, whereas Earlytrade represents the future: a digital-first, supplier-friendly solution that aligns incentives, builds trust, and helps the industry fund itself. By reimagining payments as a strategic tool rather than a compliance exercise, it is leading the charge towards a stronger, more resilient construction sector."



<https://earlytrade.com>

SUPPORTING INNOVATION TO DRIVE PRODUCTIVITY, PROFITABILITY, AND SAFETY

This article explores the new Innovation Hub developed by FIS and key technological developments from digital providers shaping construction.

FIS recognises the need for healthy innovation and helps bring new ideas to market in a structured way. This is a key role for FIS and supports its drive to improve productivity, profitability, and safety in the sector.

As part of this commitment, the new Innovation Hub redefines how ideas are discovered, shared, and adopted in the finishes and interiors industry.

Innovation Hub

The Innovation Hub brings together the latest in product development, digital transformation, and sustainability-driven design under one virtual roof. Housed on the SpecFinish platform, the Hub also features award-winning innovations from the FIS Innovation Awards.

Designed to serve architects, designers, specifiers, contractors, and manufacturers,

the Innovation Hub showcases new solutions that are shaping the future of interior environments. From smart materials and digital planning tools to low-carbon finishes and circular economy models, the platform provides curated access to what's next in the industry.

Key features of the Innovation Hub include:

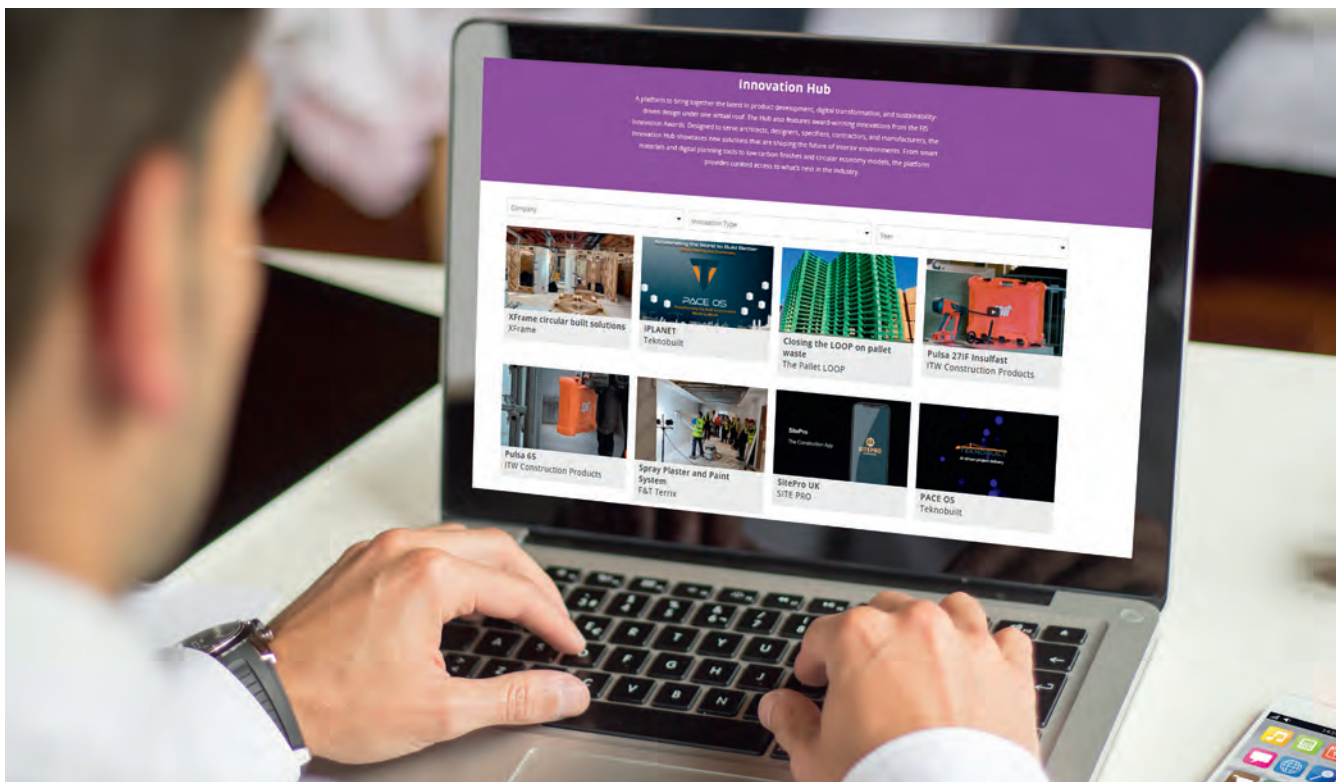
- **New products:** Discover the latest cutting-edge materials, finishes, and systems directly from leading brands and emerging disruptors.
- **Digital solutions:** Uncover the latest digital tools that help streamline project planning, from reuse and circular solutions to capturing the golden thread of information.
- **Sustainable Innovations:** Access verified green solutions, low-impact products, and initiatives aligned with LEED, WELL, BREEAM, and other standards.

With the sector under increasing pressure to innovate responsibly and digitally, the Innovation Hub provides a much-needed platform to accelerate adoption of forward-thinking solutions.

Visit www.specfinish.co.uk/innovation-hub to explore the Innovation Hub.

As mentioned, the Innovation Hub features information on advancements from suppliers of digital tools that support the construction process. These include estimating, procurement, and cost reporting; passive fire product monitoring; solutions for digitising task management, documentation, and communication, Golden Thread Project Management software and attendance tracking.

We spoke with several of them to understand their products and recent developments in both their products and their businesses.



Chalkstring: A new chapter for specialist contractors – and for us

Specialist contractors are at the heart of our built environment, yet they often face the toughest commercial challenges. In today's slower, more competitive market, confidence in pricing, visibility of costs, and commercial control on-site are more important than ever — and that's exactly what Chalkstring's cost management software is built to deliver.

We were born out of the interiors sector to solve the real issues specialist contractors face every day. This part of the market has long been underserved by technology, leaving many businesses reliant on spreadsheets and manual processes.

Chalkstring was created to change that. Our mission is clear: to help specialist contractors run profitable and sustainable businesses, in a sector where insolvency rates remain stubbornly high.

Over the last 18 months, Chalkstring has entered a refreshed chapter of innovation and collaboration.

Jacqui Blakemore is leading our product function with a fresh approach that puts clients firmly at the centre. We've introduced a development partner programme, inviting specialist contractors to help shape new ideas, with more

frequent releases driven directly by votes from our feature request portal.

We've also brought in Quantity Surveyor **Janie Cottam**, who has experienced the good, the bad, and the ugly of live projects firsthand. She uses that expertise to help clients get the most out of Chalkstring.

"In a more competitive market, specialist contractors need confidence in their pricing. Estimating has to be fast, accurate, and give the ability to value engineer options. But too often, once projects are underway, critical information sits in spreadsheets, different systems, or even in people's heads.

"That's why many don't know how their jobs are really performing, or their true cost-to-complete. Chalkstring brings all of this together in one place — so our clients can take control commercially and protect their margin," said **Sarah Crawford**, Managing Director.

The recent product innovation is that Chalkstring is now available in three modular options, making it easier for specialist contractors to take the first step and expand as they're ready:

- **Takeoff only:** Removes the pain of manual measurement, keeping pace with drawing revisions and reducing risk throughout the tender process.
- **Estimating (includes Takeoff):** Speeds up repetitive processes and provides tools for accurate, competitive tenders — including value engineering to compare options with confidence.
- **Cost Management (includes Takeoff + Estimating):** Extends into live project delivery, managing costs, labour, procurement, variations, valuations, and crucially, cost-to-complete — giving specialist contractors a clear, real-time view of performance to protect profit.

www.chalkstring.com



FireDNA's evolving passive fire product monitoring system and mobile app

As digital innovators, we are continually developing our products to provide more efficient ways to track, manage, and report critical passive fire product safety data. We're also focused on eliminating the "pain points" in day-to-day fire safety tasks.

We're also always looking for ways to make our products more intuitive, responsive, robust and intelligent, with the aim of creating greater efficiencies and accuracy across the construction sectors 'competency and compliance data' reporting requirements. This will not only help to save valuable time and cost, but can also assist in reducing disputes, conflicts and liabilities.

We continue to strive to our end goal: "To develop and deliver a product that captures, tracks, manages and reports on the data for every passive fire product and component installed within a building. From stand-alone doorsets through to full fire compartmentation, all within a single easy-to-use system."

Innovation: Latest software and mobile app release

With our latest software and mobile app release that goal is now reality, effectively launching the "FireDNA Full Passive Fire Product" system.

A system developed specifically for main contractors, subcontractors, installers and maintenance and inspection teams, as well as other "responsible persons", to capture, track and manage the full passive fire protection product mix, crucial to support full active and passive fire protection strategies. Ensuring transparency and accountability along the "chain of responsibility" in-line with the "Golden Thread" principles and the latest legislation.

Our system brings highly detailed information and data together through a single streamlined interface, with our new app modules now covering:

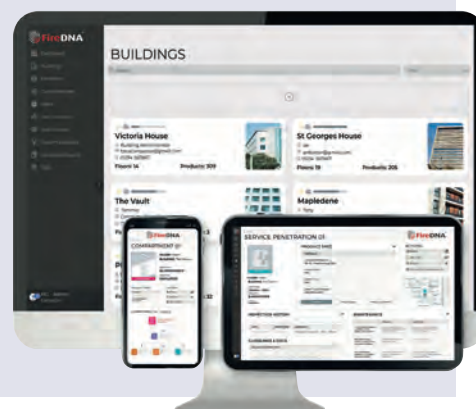
- Fire Doors and Doorsets in Timber, Steel and Composite
- Drylining, Fire Walls and Partitions
- Service Penetrations
- Fire Barriers, Dampers and HVAC

- Full Compartmentation
- Fire Risk Assessment to Pas79 Standards

FireDNA is a live cloud-based "digital data conduit" that enables effective and efficient passive fire project management and hand-over as well as ongoing fire asset management and compliance reporting.

We like to call it "the ultimate passive fire asset tracking and management system" that delivers "highly detailed data from component to compartment!"

www.fire-dna.com



PlanRadar's SiteView: A smarter way to document and deliver fit-out projects

For fit-out companies operating in today's fast-paced construction environment, digital tools that improve efficiency, accuracy and collaboration are more valuable than ever.

One area where PlanRadar has seen growing interest among fit-out companies is in condition surveys. Customers like Oktra have found that the platform is ideal for speeding up condition surveys by allowing on-site teams to collect all the evidence they need – from photos and videos through to voice notes – and report this all back to the office with the click of a button. For Oktra, this cuts the amount of time it takes to produce a condition survey in half.

A new innovation: SiteView

To support condition surveys and other documentation needs, we have created SiteView. This new tool allows users to capture full 360° images of a site directly from a smartphone or compatible camera,

pinned to exact locations on a digital floorplan. The result is an interactive, date-stamped visual record of site conditions — ideal for condition surveys, progress updates, and handover documentation.

For fit-out firms delivering high-value interiors where detail is critical, this tool helps mitigate risks — including potential litigation — by providing clear, indisputable records at every stage of the project. It also drives efficiency by replacing manual photo reports with an integrated solution that can be instantly shared with stakeholders.

SiteView was tested in a beta phase by PlanRadar customers. **Alex Turner**, Digital Construction Director at Oktra, said of the technology: "From conditional surveys to real time progress reporting, SiteView elevates how we deliver projects, giving team members who

cannot be on-site daily more visibility and oversight. It enables us to better deliver for our customers, as we can provide visual updates on how the project is progressing. Plus – it's easy to capture the 360 images during a simple walk around the site."

<https://www.planradar.com/gb>



TRAPPCO's Attendance Module: Ending the era of paper timesheets

For years, UK construction firms have relied on paper sign-in sheets to track who's on site. It's a familiar system, but also deeply flawed one.

Recent insights show that around 60% of construction businesses still use paper-based attendance records. The risks are well known: missing or falsified entries, "creative" clocking in and out, and even buddy punching, where one operative signs in for another.

The consequences are serious: overpayments for hours not worked, payroll delays caused by manual data entry, and compliance gaps with no reliable audit trail. It's no wonder one industry

expert recently described the manual sign-in sheet as a "fraud factory."

In short, paper makes it hard to trust your attendance data, and that impacts budgets, efficiency, and compliance.

A smarter way forward

This is why we have developed the TRAPPCO Attendance Module, our latest innovation designed to make attendance tracking easier, faster, and more reliable.

Instead of relying on your old paper sheets, TRAPPCO gives those sheets a digital makeover delivering:

- Instant, accurate attendance records across all your sites.
- A real-time snapshot of who is on site, where, and when.

- An accurate historic record for audits, compliance checks, or disputes.
- The ability to eliminate overpayments overnight by paying only for hours worked.

More than just attendance

The module isn't just about knowing who's on site. It also helps you:

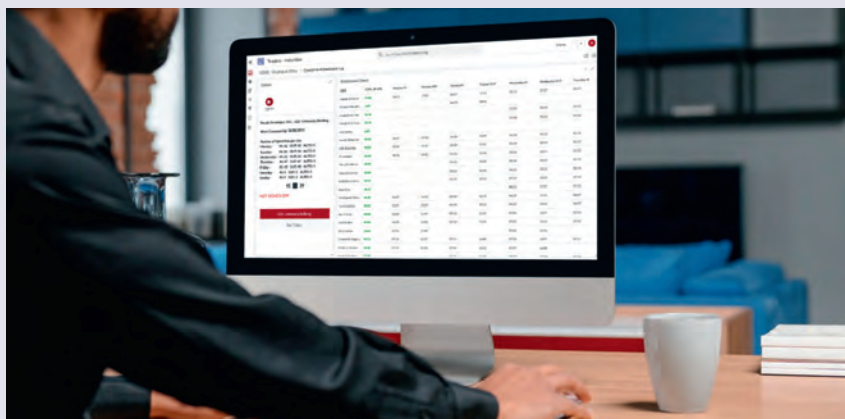
- **Support the Golden Thread:** linking attendance with competence and compliance records.
- **Boost productivity:** spotting lateness or absence patterns that could affect schedules.
- **Stay compliant:** with secure, timestamped logs that meet H&S and labour law requirements.
- **Reduce admin:** no more chasing, filing, or retyping paper forms.
- **Save money:** a low-cost, practical alternative to expensive biometric systems.

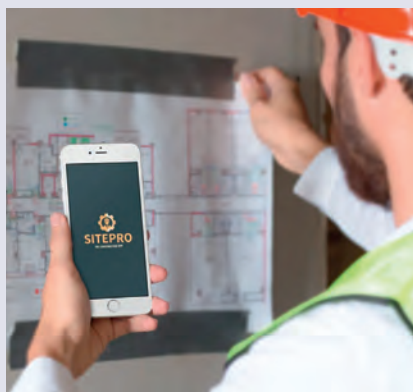
Why it matters

Margins are tight, regulations are tougher, and clients expect transparency. Construction businesses need systems they can trust. With the module, you gain clarity, accuracy, and confidence in your workforce data, without disrupting your existing processes.

It's time to move from paper chaos to digital clarity.

www.trappco.co.uk





SitePro UK: Streamlining construction compliance

In an industry where compliance documentation can make or break a project, SitePro UK has introduced a major upgrade to its platform that promises to revolutionise how construction companies manage staff training records, daily documentation, and safety protocols.

One-Click Training Matrix: The end of manual spreadsheets

A standout feature of SitePro's latest update is the enhanced Staff Training Matrix, which consolidates all employee qualifications and certifications into a single, easy-to-access dashboard. Gone are the days of digging through filing cabinets or scrolling through endless spreadsheets to verify worker credentials.

All registered users upload their qualifications and certifications directly through the app during site pre-enrolment. The system automatically collates this

information, allowing managers to view cards and certificates directly from exported Excel sheets with just one click.

The benefits extend far beyond convenience. Built-in expiry alerts ensure no certification lapses unnoticed, while bespoke card and certification tracking eliminates the risk of misplaced copies. For companies dealing with CHAS (Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme) and Construction line requirements, the manual spreadsheet era is officially over.

Contemporary Daily Diary documentation made simple

The platform's Daily Diary feature addresses another critical compliance challenge: maintaining contemporaneous records. Users can input detailed notes throughout the day or at day's end, complete with photographic evidence. These records export seamlessly to PDF or Excel formats from the dashboard.

Contemporaneous records are crucial when managing delays. Making them as easy to record as possible, with photographic backup, is essential for protecting clients in potential delay claims.

The system's pre-defined sections ensure comprehensive daily documentation, while its digital format eliminates the age-old problems of soggy notepads and misplaced paperwork.

Digital Toolbox Talks: Training at your fingertips

The platform's Toolbox Talk functionality transforms traditional safety briefings into

an interactive, trackable process. Companies can upload existing materials in video, PDF, or Word formats, then assign them to specific individuals or entire project teams.

Recipients receive automatic notifications to complete their assigned talks, and all materials remain accessible on mobile devices for instant refreshers. The integrated dashboard provides complete audit trails with timestamps and signatures, ensuring full compliance visibility.

The bottom line

These modifications represent more than technological advancement — they offer a fundamental shift toward proactive compliance management. By centralising training records, streamlining documentation, and digitising safety protocols, the platform transforms compliance from a reactive burden into a strategic advantage.

<https://site-pro.app/>





BUILT ON EXPERIENCE, DRIVEN BY INNOVATION: ITW SPIT AT THE FOREFRONT OF CONSTRUCTION

At **ITW SPIT**, we have spent over 70 years developing high-performance fixing and fastening solutions trusted by construction professionals across the UK and Europe. As part of the global **Illinois Tool Works (ITW)** group, we combine local expertise with the backing of a Fortune 500 company. Our products, including industry-leading tools like the Pula 65 and Tapcon screws, are engineered to make installation faster, easier, and more reliable. More than just tools, we offer complete fixing solutions and dedicated support to help our customers build better.

Who we are at ITW SPIT

At **ITW SPIT**, we are proud to be one of the leading names in fixing and fastening solutions for the construction industry. With a strong legacy, a focus on innovation, and a deep commitment to our customers, we have spent decades developing high-performance tools and fixings that professionals across the UK and Europe trust on the job every day.

We are more than just a brand — we are part of a wider network within **ITW Construction Products** and the **Illinois Tool Works (ITW) group**, a global Fortune 500 company. This means that while we operate with a hands-on, local approach, we remain empowered by the scale, expertise, and resources of a global industrial leader.

Our history

SPIT was founded in 1951 in France. There are many misconceptions about our name, and we are ready to share the full story. Our name is of French origin, spouting from Société de Prospection et d'Inventions Techniques, which, when translated into English, means “Company for Exploration and Technical Inventions” — and we have stayed true to that spirit of invention ever since. Our founder, **Roger Dorgnon**, was an engineer who had the bold idea to adapt firearm powder technology to develop the first powder-actuated fastening tools for the construction sector (some of which you may be familiar with in our well-known P370 and P560 products).

It was a revolutionary idea at the time — and it caught on quickly. So much so

that “SPIT” became a term widely used to describe direct fastening, no matter the brand of tool. Over the decades, we have continued to push boundaries with each generation of product we release, cementing our place as a go-to solution for fastening into concrete and steel. In the 1980s, we became part of **Illinois Tool Works**, a multinational company with more than 100 years of industrial experience. Being part of the ITW family allows us to combine world-class research and global support, while staying agile and focused on what matters most: our customers.

What we do

We specialise in **direct fastening systems**, specifically designed for use

in **concrete and steel**. Our product range covers everything from gas-powered nailers to fire-rated fixings and cable management systems. We engineer our products with the end user in mind — we want everything we design to make your job faster, easier, and more reliable.

Some of our most well-known products include:

- **Pulsa 65:** Our 5th-generation gas nailer, known for its strength, reliability, and versatility.
- **Pulsa 27 Insulfast:** Our nail gun designed for fixers to install insulation 8 times faster.
- **Tapcon concrete screws:** Industry-leading performance for heavy-duty applications.
- **Fire-rated fixings:** Fully tested and compliant solutions for safety-critical installations.

Whether you are a drywall contractor, a mechanical or electrical installer, or working in general construction, we have solutions built for your trade and the environments you work in.

Part of ITW Construction Products

As part of **ITW Construction Products**, we work alongside other trusted brands like **Paslode**, **Cullen**, and **Gang-Nail**. Together, we cover all major fixing applications — from concrete and steel to timber and off-site manufacturing.

Our shared values under the ITW umbrella focus on:

- **Customer-driven innovation**
- **Practical excellence**
- **Focus on core products and services**

Who we serve

In the UK and Ireland, we work closely with specialist fixings distributors and national merchants to supply tools and consumables to construction professionals across the country.

Our core customers include:

- Drywall and partitioning professionals
- General construction companies
- Electrical contractors
- Mechanical installers
- Fire safety contractors

We do not just provide tools — we provide **full fixing solutions**, including consumables, accessories, technical documentation and support. That means when you choose SPIT, you are choosing a complete solution, not just a single product.

Service and support

Our job does not end when the product leaves the warehouse. We back everything we sell with a strong support network across the UK, Ireland and the Nordics. From tool maintenance and repair to site visits and technical advice, we are committed to making sure our solutions perform in the real world.

We also offer:

- **Product training**
- **On-site demonstrations**
- **Fire certification documentation**
- **Expert training and support**
- **Servicing and maintenance**

We understand that reliability matters — delays cost time and money — so we design our service around keeping your jobs moving.



Why our customers choose us is pretty simple

Construction is tough. Tools and fixings need to stand up to demanding conditions, deliver consistent results, and keep projects running to schedule. That is where we come in.

We are driven by a few core beliefs:

- **Performance matters:** Our tools are tested, proven, and built to last.
- **Simplicity vs complexity:** We design for ease of use and efficient installation.
- **Being one call away is everything:** We are on-hand when you need us, with fast turnaround and expert advice.
- **Innovation never stops:** From our first powder-actuated tool to today's Pulsa nailers, we keep pushing what is possible.

Looking ahead

Our industry is evolving — faster build schedules, tighter budgets, growing safety requirements, and increasing demand for sustainable solutions. We are responding by continually improving our products, reducing our environmental impact, and helping our customers build smarter.

With new products launching regularly, including improved battery life, lighter designs, and smarter accessories, we are ready to support the next generation of construction professionals.

In summary

At **ITW SPIT**, we are proud to be part of a legacy that started over 70 years ago. We have grown from a small French innovation company into a trusted brand in the global construction industry — known for reliable tools, customer-first service, and fixing solutions that make a difference.

When you choose SPIT, you are not just choosing a product — you are choosing a team that is committed to supporting you from planning through to completion. We are SPIT - and we are here to help you **build better**.



THE POWER OF PRODUCT TRANSPARENCY: EPDS AND THE NEW STANDARD IN SPECIFICATION

Will Hunnam, Managing Director of Forza Doors, shares his thoughts on Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), which have become one of the most powerful tools to drive sustainability in the construction industry.

EPDs (third-party verified life cycle assessments (LCA) of a product or system) are not new; they have been around in some form for decades. However, the last 10 years have seen an exponential increase in uptake by product manufacturers.

Having an EPD does not prove that a product is “green,” but it does provide essential information about its environmental performance and shows that the manufacturer is on a journey toward greater sustainability.

Today, it is increasingly common for manufacturers to be asked for an EPD. In some cases, products may not be selected simply because they lack one — regardless of how “good” or “bad” the results might be.

The demand is driven by the need to measure the environmental impact of buildings or projects and therefore a need to get better data on products, which EPDs provide.

Powering sustainable manufacturing

Once a far-fetched addition to technical literature, EPDs are now central to specification decisions - and for good reason. As the sector intensifies its focus on reducing embodied carbon and improving transparency, interiors play a pivotal role in accelerating progress.

For those specifying fire doors and acoustic solutions across high-performance commercial projects, EPDs offer more than compliance. They bring clarity, comparability, and credibility to a space where environmental claims often outpace evidence. With rising pressure to balance sustainability targets with technical performance, EPDs are emerging as the bridge between both - enabling greener choices without compromise.

As the UK's first timber fire door manufacturer to publish third-party verified EPDs, we've seen firsthand how investing in sustainable practices can deliver broader

value — not just environmentally, but also operationally and commercially. These decisions have helped us build stronger relationships with like-minded partners, creating momentum for more accountable and transparent practices across the industry.

Establishing a new normal

Leading construction projects are shaped by ambitious carbon reduction targets and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals. Certification schemes such as BREEAM, LEED, WELL and SKA rating are influencing product selection more than ever, demanding evidence of environmental impact across the full product lifecycle.

For interiors, whether door assemblies, partitions, ceilings, or decorative finishes, this has fuelled growing demand for third-party verified data. EPDs meet this need through standardised assessments that capture a product's environmental footprint, from raw materials to end-of-life. Metrics such as Global Warming Potential (GWP), resource use, and recyclability are becoming standard features in specification discussions, and as manufacturers we need to be able to provide the answers – quickly and coherently. That's why we've made all data available to view and download on our Forza Doors website¹. We need to remove the barriers for specifiers, and this is a key step forward.

Unlocking the potential of commercial interiors

While embodied carbon conversations tend to focus on core and shell materials like steel and concrete, it's the interior fit-out that is often reworked multiple times throughout a building's life². Ceilings are adjusted, partitions reconfigured, doors, fixtures and fittings replaced. The cumulative carbon cost of these changes is significant and often overlooked.

This presents both a challenge and an opportunity. EPDs support more informed



Will Hunnam, Managing Director, Forza Doors

procurement and design decisions by making environmental performance easier to assess, but they don't provide the full picture. For example, a product may have been selected for its 10 plus year warranty, but tenant changeover may mean that a product is replaced after just three or four years. There's certainly work to do across the industry to encourage recycling and reuse of not just materials but also finished products.

Learning from the process

Developing an EPD isn't just a tick box exercise. It's a process that reveals the full environmental profile of a product, from material sourcing and manufacturing, to transport and end-of-life. As early adopters, we've learnt that insight drives change. Our production teams can make immediate adjustments that shape long-term R&D strategies. Whether it's selecting lower-impact materials, reducing waste, or optimising energy use, EPDs only trigger positive action beyond the specification phase.

The outcome is not only a stronger environmental scorecard, but a more competitive, resilient business – one that's ready for a future where environmental metrics matter as much as fire ratings or acoustic performance. For us, sustainability is no longer an abstract ambition, but central to our vision and long-term strategy.

EPDs as a collaboration catalyst

Beyond just technical documents, EPDs facilitate collaboration. Shared data creates a shared language, enabling clearer dialogue between architects, contractors, and suppliers. In our experience, projects where EPDs are specified often benefit from better coordination between design vision and material execution.

EPDs are more than documents containing key data points, they are declarations of intent. By investing in them, we've been able to open conversations, grounded in transparency and common goals, with specifiers who are equally committed to sustainability. These shared values have strengthened relationships and collaboration on some of the UK's most innovative developments, where EPDs are now a baseline requirement. It also marks a clear and measurable step towards our commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050 and serves as an explicit message to the industry that it is not only possible, but a beneficial business decision.

When both sides work from the same data, trust follows. And trust accelerates decisions, reduces friction and supports repeat business.

Raising standards across the supply chain

The adoption of EPDs doesn't only improve individual product transparency – it lifts expectations across the industry. Specifiers and architects are asking contractors to prove their environmental credentials with hard data, not just abstract claims. This is raising the bar. Manufacturers, like us, are commissioning lifecycle assessments. Distributors are prioritising EPD-backed

stock. Contractors are building EPDs into procurement frameworks.

Soon, the ability to provide verified environmental data will be just as much a part of the specifying process as the need to meet fire safety or acoustic standards. Put simply: if a product can't prove its environmental impact, it may not make the spec list.

Building carbon literacy in fit-out

One of the most valuable, but overlooked, benefits of EPDs is how they build carbon literacy across project teams. They make environmental performance visible and comparable. This helps specifiers and contractors make better decisions and justify them to stakeholders.

Procurement choices are increasingly based on lifecycle impact, not just price or appearance. Metrics like GWP, recyclability and circular economy potential are informing specifications.

What if every design decision also considered its future impact? Doors with lower embodied carbon cores. Modular partitions that can be reused. Ceilings designed for disassembly. These aren't hypothetical; they're real-world design decisions, driven by data.

From compliance to leadership

What started as a compliance mechanism has become a platform for leadership. Manufacturers that embed EPDs into product development signal readiness to meet higher standards – and for us, have become a starting point to conversations with new and returning clients.

As the industry shifts towards low-carbon construction, environmental data will carry more weight. Forward-thinking interiors



manufacturers and suppliers are already responding, using EPDs to demonstrate transparency, accountability and innovation.

For architects and designers, EPDs provide reassurance that specified products support project goals rather than hinder them.

The road ahead: opportunity in plain sight

The move to lower-carbon construction isn't a future ambition — it's happening now. EPDs are becoming standard practice, especially in commercial interiors, where the sector is positioned to lead the way.

This is a clear opportunity to shift from reactive compliance to proactive responsibility. By demanding and integrating EPDs into design and procurement, the interiors industry can deliver better results with lower environmental impact.

The tools are proven, standards are established, and demand is rising. Forza Doors has embraced this early, raising the bar and unlocking real commercial and operational benefits. In a market where trust and transparency drive decisions, those who can prove their impact will shape the future.

The question now is how quickly the sector will step up.



www.forza-doors.com

EPD tool

Recognising both the importance of obtaining an EPD and the challenges around cost and complexity, the FIS has partnered with Recolight to offer a discount on the One Click LCA EPD tool. They also provide training courses for those interested in learning more about the EPD process, including how to read and interpret them. For more information, please contact Flavie Lowres: flavielowres@thefis.org.

Source

1. www.forza-doors.com/documents-downloads
2. <https://reset.build/newsroom/320?utm>



IS THE BIGGEST LIE IN ACOUSTICS THAT THE EXPERTS IN ACOUSTIC DESIGN ARE DESIGNING FOR ALL ENVIRONMENTS?

Pascal van Dort, Global Acoustics Ambassador at Rockfon, talks about why industrial acoustics are often overlooked, despite the impact of noise on worker health and performance, and how a recent case study shows acoustic improvements can make a difference.

Pascal van Dort, Global Acoustics Ambassador at Rockfon



When it comes to acoustic design, we often hear that we're creating optimised indoor acoustics for every environment like office, education, and healthcare. But are we really? If you ask me, the voices, and ears of industrial workers are all too often left out of the conversation.

This issue is nothing new. More than a century ago, in 1910, at the 2nd Congress of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), **Dr. Alfred Peyser** presented a paper entitled "Industrial diseases and injuries of the auditory system." Even then, experts recognised the unique risks faced by those working in noisy industrial environments. Peyser's work marked one of the earliest formal acknowledgments that internal industrial noise can cause serious, lasting health problems, long before noise regulations and decibel meters became commonplace.

Fast forward to my recent visit to Forum Acusticum - Euronoise in Málaga, where

my presentation, "Acoustic Measurements and Employee Feedback: Addressing Noise in Industrial Work Environments – A Case Study¹," stood in stark contrast to hundreds of minutes dedicated to offices, hospitals, classrooms and concert halls. In total, just 20 minutes (my own presentation) was focused on factories and industrial workplaces. Yet, these environments harbor some of the most significant daily challenges in acoustic comfort and health for workers.

Beyond safety: Why noise matters more than just hearing loss

Conversations about industrial noise generally focus on health and safety compliance, keeping exposure to legal limits to prevent hearing loss. Of course, this is essential. European legislation, for example, mandates action at sound exposure levels of 80 – 85 dB(A), and stricter measures at 87 dB(A). But is minimising risk of hearing damage enough?

Rockfon's recent case study in a Belgian metal profiles manufacturing hall argues that it's not. Various room acoustic measurements were conducted within the production hall to assess reverberation time and sound levels. Additionally, a survey was distributed to 83 workers to collect qualitative data on their experiences with noise exposure and its effects on their work environment. The measurements indicated reverberant noise levels (Leq) reaching up to 92 dB(A), and performed dosimeter readings among employees showed noise levels (Lex) between 85 and 89 dB(A), highlighting a challenging indoor acoustic environment.

Such figures are not unusual. Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) is a well-known risk across many industrial sectors and it can lead to permanent damage if left unaddressed. However, the impact of workplace noise goes far beyond hearing loss alone, affecting many other aspects of employees' wellbeing, performance and daily experience.

The human cost: Stress, annoyance, fatigue and productivity

The physical effects of excessive noise; headaches, tinnitus, vocal strain from shouting, exhaustion and stress, affect workers both on and off the job. In our survey of the 83 production hall workers, over 75% described their workplace as "too noisy," while 81% said they must raise their voices to communicate.

To capture the broader impact, we asked workers: "Do the sound levels in your work environment (often or always) affect your wellbeing, stress, productivity or concentration?" The results are telling:

- 29% said their wellbeing is affected
- 21% reported higher stress levels
- 23% felt it impacted their productivity
- 28% said their concentration suffers.

Perhaps most alarming, a striking 18% reported suffering from tinnitus, described by workers as "a beeb in my ear", either often or always. While occasional ringing after noise exposure is not uncommon, this persistent or frequent beeping is a clear indicator of tinnitus, which can severely impact quality of life and is far above the general population average one in ten worldwide. This statistic underlines the invisible, long-term toll noise can take on industrial workers' health and wellbeing.

Engineering a better sound: What we learned from acoustic interventions

Our approach in the case study combined room acoustic measurements with a thorough employee survey. The acoustic mapping showed persistent, high reverberation and poor sound decay, meaning noise from one production line spills into adjacent areas. With room acoustic modelling software it was found that adding Class A sound-absorbing suspended ceiling tiles and wall panels could reduce average noise levels by 5–6 dB(A), a change perceptible and meaningful to those on the factory floor.



Industry area, DORMA Hüppe
with Rockfon Industrial Baffle

Improving acoustics is more than simply meeting regulatory limits, it's a tool for enhancing concentration, communication and general wellbeing. The transition to a healthier noise environment leads not just to fewer headaches or less stress, but also to better engagement, improved production quality and a happier, more sustainable workforce.

A call to action: Let's listen to the staff

Acoustic comfort in industrial settings is rarely prioritised, until it becomes a problem too big to ignore. We need to shift our attention from basic compliance to a holistic view that values the everyday experience of (industrial) workers. We should engage with their feedback. Go beyond decibel readings. And acknowledge that a positive acoustic environment is essential for comfort and satisfaction.

www.rockfon.co.uk

Pascal's presentation and subsequent LinkedIn post raised a fresh debate on the issue of acoustic comfort. **Louise Beamish**, Chair of the Association of Noise Consultants (ANC) and Director of Acoustics at WSP, and **Jack Harvie-Clark** of Apex Acoustics, an ANC member company, who attended Pascal's presentation at Forum Acusticum - Euronoise in Málaga shared their thoughts on the debate.



Jack Harvie-Clark of Apex Acoustics

Jack said: "What struck me most was the profound human cost his research reveals.

"Beyond the stark statistic that 18 per cent of industrial workers experience tinnitus symptoms – well above the 10 per cent global average – his findings paint a picture of widespread suffering.

"When 76% of workers describe their workplace as too noisy, when people return home exhausted day after day, when stress and fatigue become normalised parts of industrial work, we're witnessing a systemic failure to provide humane working conditions for millions of people."



Louise Beamish, Chair of the Association of Noise Consultants (ANC) and Director of Acoustics at WSP

Louise said: "As acoustic comfort in industrial environments has been brought to the fore in Pascal's debate, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has raised significant concerns about whether legal standards are being met.

"At the ANC Annual Conference this summer, **Chris Steele**, the HSE's Principal Specialist Inspector for Noise and Vibration, told delegates that 50 per cent of industry's ill health claims come from noise.

"He set out the CUFF acronym, when looking at hearing protection, Condition, Use, Fit for the Ear and Fit for Purpose, as the key message that is being used to improve outcomes.

"Chris also pointed out that of the top five industries with the highest percentage of workplaces above the upper exposure action value, around half do not use an external provider to help them with workplace noise."

Jack added: "Pascal's case study demonstrates that solutions exist – acoustic wall and ceiling treatments are likely to achieve meaningful reductions of 5-6 dB(A).

"We need to champion industrial workers with the same vigour we apply to concert halls and corporate headquarters.

"This isn't just about compliance; it's about recognising that all employees deserve environments that support their wellbeing, not just their survival.

"These aren't just production facilities; they're spaces where people spend the majority of their waking hours, often for decades.

"Every worker deserves dignity, comfort, and the ability to communicate without shouting – regardless of whether they wear a hard hat or a suit to work."

A professional approach to tackling the issue

Louise concluded by saying: "Good acoustic design in industrial facilities is essential for protecting our hearing and contributing to a comfortable working environment; it's the responsible thing to do.

"Whilst it can be seen as an added expense, I'd encourage operators of industrial facilities to see the benefits of good acoustic design in creating a work environment that encourages staff wellbeing and, therefore, enhances productivity through better working conditions."

Source

1. <https://tinyurl.com/33b4w6tb>

About the ANC

Finding a solution to the challenges of noise in industrial workspaces is something that members of the ANC are well placed to address.

The voice of professional consultancy in acoustics, noise and vibration in the UK, the ANC's purpose is to highlight how its members lead the way to improve acoustics for the whole of society, and to promote high standards and good practice in the industry.

Featuring 110 members, their expertise creates usable environments from the most challenging sites, with solutions that can meet not only the health and safety requirements, but aid much-needed acoustic comfort too.

To find out more about the ANC visit: www.association-of-noise-consultants.co.uk

THE OVERLOOKED KEY TO UNLOCKING GATEWAY 2 DELAYS

Dr Stephen Hamil, Innovation Director at NBS (part of Hubexo), shares his thoughts on the Gateway 2 delays, and explains how tackling these challenges with the tools now available to the industry can improve compliance, safety, and efficiency for all stakeholders.



Dr Stephen Hamil, Innovation Director at NBS (part of Hubexo)

The Gateway 2 bottleneck

With rejection rates hovering around 75%¹ and approval times stretching to 40 weeks instead of the expected 8-12 weeks, Gateway 2 has become a critical chokepoint threatening UK housing delivery. These delays represent stalled developments, increased costs and potentially thousands of homes that won't be built. For the Build-to-Rent sector, which has already seen five consecutive quarters of decline², these regulatory hurdles are further undermining investor confidence precisely when housing supply needs to increase.

Gateway 2, the mandatory stop/go checkpoint required before construction can begin on buildings over 18 metres or seven storeys high³, comes with substantial costs. The charges may begin with a £180.00 application fee plus £144.00 per hour for the Building Safety Regulator's (BSR) review time⁴; but the true expense lies in the delays, which flow through the entire construction supply chain.

As an industry, construction has focused considerable attention on the regulatory burden and process blockages. However, there's a critical factor that remains underexamined; the quality and consistency of technical specifications submitted as part of Gateway 2 applications.

The specification problem

A Gateway 2 submission must contain high-quality, detailed information that clearly and comprehensively demonstrates how the design and construction of a higher-risk building (HRB) will comply with the Building Regulations 2010. A well-structured submission enables the BSR to efficiently locate and assess the required information, reducing delays and the risk of rejection.

In practice, many applications encounter problems due to inconsistent terminology across documents, contradictory performance requirements, incomplete product specifications, missing safety parameters, poor integration between specifications and drawings, unclear compliance responsibilities, and weak version control⁵. Data from the first 18 months of the BSR regime, up to March this year, shows that the average time to obtain BSR approval was 36 weeks — three times longer than originally anticipated⁶. Applicants must clearly show how they will comply, what evidence they will provide, and when it will be submitted.

Submissions should include drawings and specifications that clearly demonstrate compliant arrangements. This could either be through prescriptive specification or through descriptive specification, with designs that accommodate multiple compliant products and dimensional constraints to allow for final product selection. Architects can strengthen

applications by ensuring they are robust, well-structured, and backed by clear evidence of compliance. Rather than relying on vague statements of intent, submissions should use detailed, evidence-based design information. Failing to meet these standards can lead to the need for notifiable or major change applications later in the process. By taking this approach, applicants can streamline the BSR review, reduce delays, and significantly increase the likelihood of Gateway 2 approval.

An industry problem, not just regulatory

It may be tempting to view Gateway 2 delays purely as a regulatory burden. However, this perspective misses something crucial. Fundamentally, the specification problems that are causing many rejections are instead issues that industry has the power to address.

Poor specification practices have long plagued construction, contributing to quality issues, disputes and inefficiencies. The Gateway 2 process simply makes these existing problems more visible and attaches greater consequences to them. The reality is that comprehensive, clear specifications benefit projects, regardless of the regulations. They reduce risk, improve buildability and deliver better all-round outcomes.

The good news is that because these are industry problems, they come with industry solutions. There's no need for us to wait for regulatory reform before making significant improvements.

Practical solutions

Several practical approaches can dramatically improve specification quality and consistency, reducing the likelihood of Gateway 2 rejections:

1. Standardisation and consistency:

Adopting standardised specification structures and terminology creates a common language that reduces ambiguity. Industry standards like Uniclass provide a classification system ensuring consistency across project documentation. When specifications follow recognised structures, BSR assessors can more easily navigate applications and verify compliance. Standardisation isn't about limiting design creativity; it's about ensuring technical requirements are communicated clearly and consistently.

2. Digital specification tools: Digital specification platforms offer significant advantages over traditional documents. They provide structured frameworks, access to up-to-date standards and also ensure consistency across document sets. These tools can automatically flag contradictions or gaps, allowing teams to address issues before submission, while facilitating collaboration between different disciplines.

3. Clear roles and responsibilities:

Many specification issues stem from unclear ownership. Establishing clear responsibilities for specification development, review and quality assurance is essential. Too often, specifications are developed in silos. Without clear co-ordination, these disconnects aren't discovered until the BSR review, making rejection inevitable.

4. Early engagement with specialists:

Appointing specialist consultants and manufacturers early in the process ensures that technical requirements are realistic and achievable. This collaborative approach bridges the gap between design intent and technical detail; particularly helpful for complex systems like fire protection where specialist knowledge is essential. Early engagement also allows for thorough pre-submission reviews, identifying potential compliance issues before they reach the BSR.

5. Continuous improvement: Each Gateway 2 submission provides valuable learning opportunities. Establishing a systematic approach to capturing and applying these lessons ensures that specification quality improves over time. This should include maintaining a library of approved specifications for future projects.

Implications for housing delivery

The impact of Gateway 2 delays extends far beyond individual projects. The Build-to-Rent sector is particularly vulnerable here, as such developments typically operate on financial models that are highly sensitive to

timeline delays. Extended pre-construction periods increase financing costs and delay revenue generation, potentially making marginal schemes unviable. In the context of global investment, these uncertainties make the UK market less attractive compared to competitors with more predictable approval processes.

Recent industry estimates suggest that Gateway 2 delays could reduce housing delivery by 10-15% in affected categories over the next two years if current approval timeframes persist⁷. This comes at a time when housing targets are already challenging to meet.

Implications for specialist contractors

For specialist contractors in the finishes and interiors sector, Gateway 2 delays can create a mass of operational headaches. The fit-out and finishes phase, representing approximately £10 billion annually in the UK construction market⁸, is particularly vulnerable to upstream regulatory bottlenecks.

When projects stall at Gateway 2, specialist contractors face scheduling uncertainty (making resource allocation difficult), cash flow disruption (creating gaps in payment schedules), contract complications (often necessitating renegotiations), and supply chain pressures (as materials may face availability or price changes during extended delays).

For specialist contractors, these are not theoretical challenges. In a sector where buildings typically undergo 30-40 fit-outs during their lifecycle⁸, regulatory efficiency directly correlates to business viability.

Where aspects of a design require specialist input, the design team to engage specialist contractors as early as possible. Early involvement allows contractors to contribute their expertise, influence critical decisions, and ensure that specifications are technically feasible. This collaborative approach not only supports successful Gateway 2 outcomes but also strengthens the role of specialist contractors as trusted partners in delivering high-quality, compliant projects.

Source

1. <https://tinyurl.com/36ytw9tm>
2. <https://tinyurl.com/53x7krvb>
3. <https://tinyurl.com/3ndjvazx>
4. <https://tinyurl.com/mwm7ze6w>
5. <https://tinyurl.com/bdeexnph>
6. <https://tinyurl.com/yeetmnda>
7. <https://tinyurl.com/3pwnjcn>
8. www.thefis.org/membership-hub/publications/specfinish

Moving forward: A call to action

The Building Safety Act and its associated Gateways are here to stay. Rather than viewing Gateway 2 as a regulatory hurdle, we must seize it as an opportunity to address long-standing issues in how we specify construction projects.

Industry needs to act now:

- **Invest in specification quality:**

Allocate appropriate resources to developing robust specifications from the outset

- **Embrace digital tools:** Adopt platforms that ensure consistency across document sets and automatically flag contradictions

- **Establish clear ownership:** Define clear responsibilities for specification development and compliance verification

- **Engage specialists early:** Bring in technical experts to bridge the gap between design intent and practical implementation

- **Implement pre-submission reviews:** Establish and maintain rigorous quality assurance processes before each BSR submission.

These actions should begin as soon as the collaborative design team is assembled with a design responsibility matrix and outline specifications and not as an afterthought. As the Building Safety Regulator has made clear, compliance cannot be achieved by retrofitting safety considerations into already-developed designs.

As we've seen, the specification challenges highlighted by Gateway 2 aren't new problems; they're existing industry issues, only now with higher stakes. By addressing these fundamental challenges, we not only improve our regulatory compliance but also deliver better, safer buildings more efficiently. That's an outcome that benefits everyone; developers, contractors and regulators – and ultimately, building owners, residents and tenants.

The path to unlocking Gateway 2 delays starts with recognising that many rejections stem from preventable specification issues that construction as a collective now has the tools and knowledge to address. By implementing these practical improvements today, we can make significant progress as building regulations continue to evolve.

<https://www.thenbs.com/>

FIS shines a light on bad practice as drylining and plastering contractors face unfair snagging practices

The Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS) is taking a stand against poor behaviour in the supply chain following members concerns about unfair snagging practices on plaster or tape and jointed walls.

Contractors working in the housebuilding sector are reporting that, despite recommendations in standards and guidance to the contrary, LED lights continue to be used at shallow angles to inspect the finish. This improper practice whereby the light is shined close to, or directly against the surface of the wall, highlight surface imperfections which are normally imperceptible to the human eye and are well within tolerance when industry standard inspection methods are used.

To tackle the problem head on, FIS has published new guidance which members are

encouraged to download and share with their clients ahead of starting work.

This guidance covers how inspections should be conducted and encourages the classification of the flatness of the plastered finish to be agreed, along with the level of smooth finishes, before work starts.

FIS is also concerned the effect bad practices have on those looking to start a career in the sector. Young people are being encouraged into the industry but when they are faced with this culture and ruthless nature many leave before they have had chance to really see what a good career the construction industry can offer.

To support the campaign FIS will be launching a short video to help showcase the problem and is developing new training to support inspections. You can register on the FIS website to receive free access to the



training when it is launched later this year. For more information visit: www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/shine-a-light-on-bad-practice-not-walls-campaign/ To report your experiences, email details in confidence to info@thefis.org or call 0121 707 0077.



FIS Member OCL takes home Societal Impact Award

OCL has been crowned winner of the Societal Impact Award at the National Family Business Awards, held at the Royal Geographical Society in London.

A representative said: "This recognition means so much to the OCL family, as it celebrates our passion for driving positive change in the communities we serve and our commitment to creating meaningful impact through social value — all made possible by the fantastic team behind us. Not only are we delivering remarkable projects for our clients, but we're also inspiring the next generation.

"We're also honoured to have been named Runner-Up for Property and Construction Family Business of the Year among so many inspiring, values-driven companies in London and the South East."

www.ocl.london



Members milestones

Troldekt has reached the significant milestone of 90 years. Founded in Denmark in 1935, it has evolved from a local supplier in the Danish construction industry to an internationally recognised acoustic brand.

To mark this achievement, employees from across its markets came together in Denmark for a weekend of team-building activities. A highlight was the creation of a historical timeline using "recycled gold" – creative pieces representing key milestones in Troldekt's journey. The timeline concluded with a celebratory domino effect, symbolising the strong chain of people, innovation, and progress built over the decades.

To learn more about Troldekt's story which spans nine decades visit: www.troldekt.co.uk/troldekt-purpose-and-core-values/history/

To read more about these amazing achievements visit: <https://specfinish.co.uk/category/news>



FIS members PPG Industries Europe and Thirdway Shortlisted for Prestigious FT Innovative Lawyers Award Europe

FIS is delighted to celebrate the shortlisting of members PPG Industries Europe, and Thirdway, in the In-House Legal Team category at the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers Awards Europe. The awards, now in their 20th year, recognise excellence in legal innovation and highlight the impact of forward-thinking legal teams across Europe.

Recognising legal innovation that drives industry change

The Innovative Lawyers Awards Europe, hosted by the Financial Times in partnership with RSGL, honour legal professionals who apply creativity and influence to solve modern challenges to help guide clients towards agile, sustainable outcomes. The ceremony on 18 September at London's Natural History Museum unveiled the winners in front of an audience of general counsel, legal leaders, and law firms from across Europe.

Among a shortlist that includes illustrious names such as Axa, Barclays, HSBC, Rolls-Royce, Sky UK, UNICEF, and Citibank, PPG Industries Europe and Thirdway have been recognised for their work in intelligent contract design and simplification in the construction sector — a growing area of interest in the face of industry complexity and fragmentation.

A return to clarity and simplicity

Anthony Armitage, Legal Counsel at Thirdway, said: "We are proud to be shortlisted for our work in intelligent contract design and simplification in the construction sector.

"In 1866, the building industry introduced its first standard form of contract, marking a pivotal step towards greater clarity and fairness. Since then, that standardisation has been eroded by decades of amendments, increasing complexity, and bespoke drafting.

"At Thirdway, we're using AI not to disrupt tradition, but to recover it. We're applying modern tools to return to the core principles of clarity, simplicity, and balance that defined the original 1866 approach and reimagining them for today."

Anthony also acknowledged the role of industry collaboration: "We couldn't have achieved this without the remarkable support of FIS and the Conflict Avoidance Coalition."

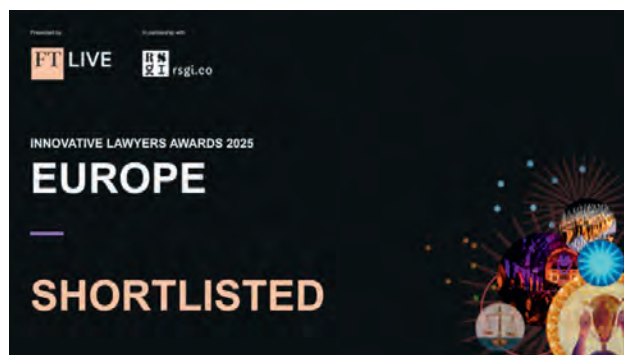
FIS welcomes the industry recognition

FIS Chief Executive **Iain McIlwee**, praised the achievement saying: "It is so encouraging to see FISmembers Thirdway and PPG Architectural Coatings UK & Ireland leading the charge for change around improving the way we simplify and better use contracts in construction. The first and most critical step in cultural reform is rethinking the way we set up our relationships and creating a transparent and collaborative approach that

builds trust rather than tension.

"Special mention for Anthony Armitage, Legal Counsel at Thirdway, who has been such a powerful advocate of change within our community and is also leading the charge by chairing the Conflict Avoidance Coalition Contracts Committee — this is well deserved."

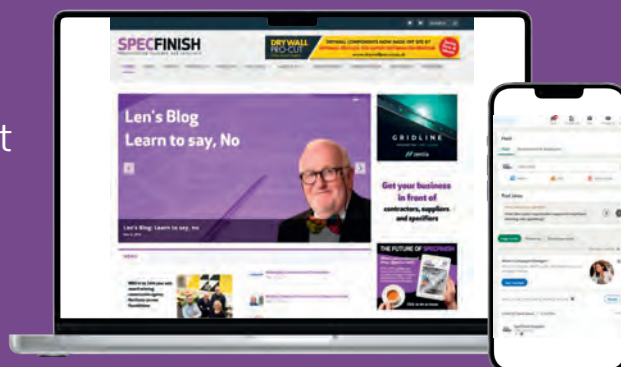
To read more about the awards visit: <https://lawyerseurope.live.ft.com/>



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