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SPEC FINISH

FIS

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representing the finishes
and interiors sector

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Skills:

Competence in
construction:
The evolving role
of CSCS

Case study:

Three FIS members
take centre stage at
Butlins Minehead

Technical:

Deloitte Crane Survey
highlights changing
office demand



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- » For the wider industry, it helps close a gap that has been open for too long



Request Report



BEHAVE! IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN FAIRNESS

A growing realisation that payment is a critical behavioural lever.



IAIN MCILWEE
Chief Executive, Finishes and Interiors Sector

For businesses operating in construction, uncertainty has always been part of the landscape. But the pace and intensity of change – commercial, technical and, increasingly, political right now is palpable.

We use to think of parliamentary cycles, with a reasonable expectation of stability between elections. Today, however populist pressure sees us lurching from media storm to leadership challenge, driving ever more short-termism.

This is an industry built on planning, sequencing and managing risk over the long term. When the environment becomes more volatile, projects stall and confidence drains away.

Risk gets reframed and, in the search for greater control, often pushed down the supply chain to those least able to absorb it. Uncertainty doesn't just affect pricing and programme, it shapes behaviour at every stage of delivery.

Competence, behaviour and system design

The Building Safety Act challenges this, it has sharpened the focus on competence and accountability across the entire lifecycle of a building. As these regulatory requirements become embedded, one message is harder to ignore, that competence is just about individual skills, qualifications or experience. It is about behaviour, and behaviour is

shaped by the system within which people are expected to work.

This system is defined by how work is procured, contracted and rewarded. Fair payment matters, but this is about more than fairness. Commercial practices that keep the supply chain in a constant state of survival actively undermine competence and compliance. Late payment and retentions are more than merely commercial irritants, they impact decision-making, the transfer of risk and undermine investment in training, supervision, innovation and safety. When cash flow becomes uncertain, behaviours deteriorate.

Payment reform and the Small Business Protection Bill

That is why the progression of the Small Business Protection Bill (see Page 22) matters. It recognises payment for what it truly is, a powerful behavioural lever. By seeking to end retentions and introduce meaningful penalties for late payment, the Bill draws a long-overdue line in the sand.

Here, political intent meets industry need. This is not about a vague notion of fairness. It is about creating the conditions in which businesses can invest, plan and perform with confidence. It is about quality, safety and resilience. Some will fight to preserve retentions, but FIS will leave nothing on the pitch in our efforts to see this Bill progress into law and, crucially, into implementation. It will take time, but this must be the final push. In the meantime, we cannot stand still.

Addressing liquidity concerns

Patience may be a virtue, but it rarely gets anyone paid. That is why, as an interim measure, we have written to the Housing Minister and the National Housing Bank, leading a coalition of specialist bodies in setting out a series of immediate actions that could ease pressure throughout the housing supply chain.

The message is simple: if government wants to see better behaviours, it cannot continue to allow major firms to sit on hundreds of millions of pounds that rightly belong in the supply chain. The £16 billion being invested in housing must support liquidity throughout the delivery process, not

merely strengthen upstream balance sheets.

At the same time, we are doubling down on the systemic abuse of standard form contracts and met again with the Building Safety Regulator in June to reinforce this point. Outside payment, scope is the single biggest driver of disputes.

Poorly drafted, or deliberately confusing contracts blur responsibility and push responsibility for engineering decisions deep into the project, often away from those best placed to make them with too little time or control to manage them.

Fragmentation, regulation and systemic reform

Work with the Building Safety Regulator is beginning to expose these systemic issues more clearly. What is emerging is not a lack of capability, but a fragmented system characterised by unclear responsibility, risk avoidance and disjointed information underpinned by contractual models that set us up to fail.

In that context, competence becomes a pipe dream.

If we are serious about competence, we must be equally serious about the behaviours that shape it. Otherwise, we are asking competent people to operate within an incoherent system and still expecting compliant outcomes. Divided we fail.

The Small Business Protection Bill is the start of change, but it will only be realised if we continue to work together with a single, strong voice. Because, together, we are stronger.

"If we are serious about competence, we must be equally serious about the behaviours that shape it."

Welcome

SPEC FINISH

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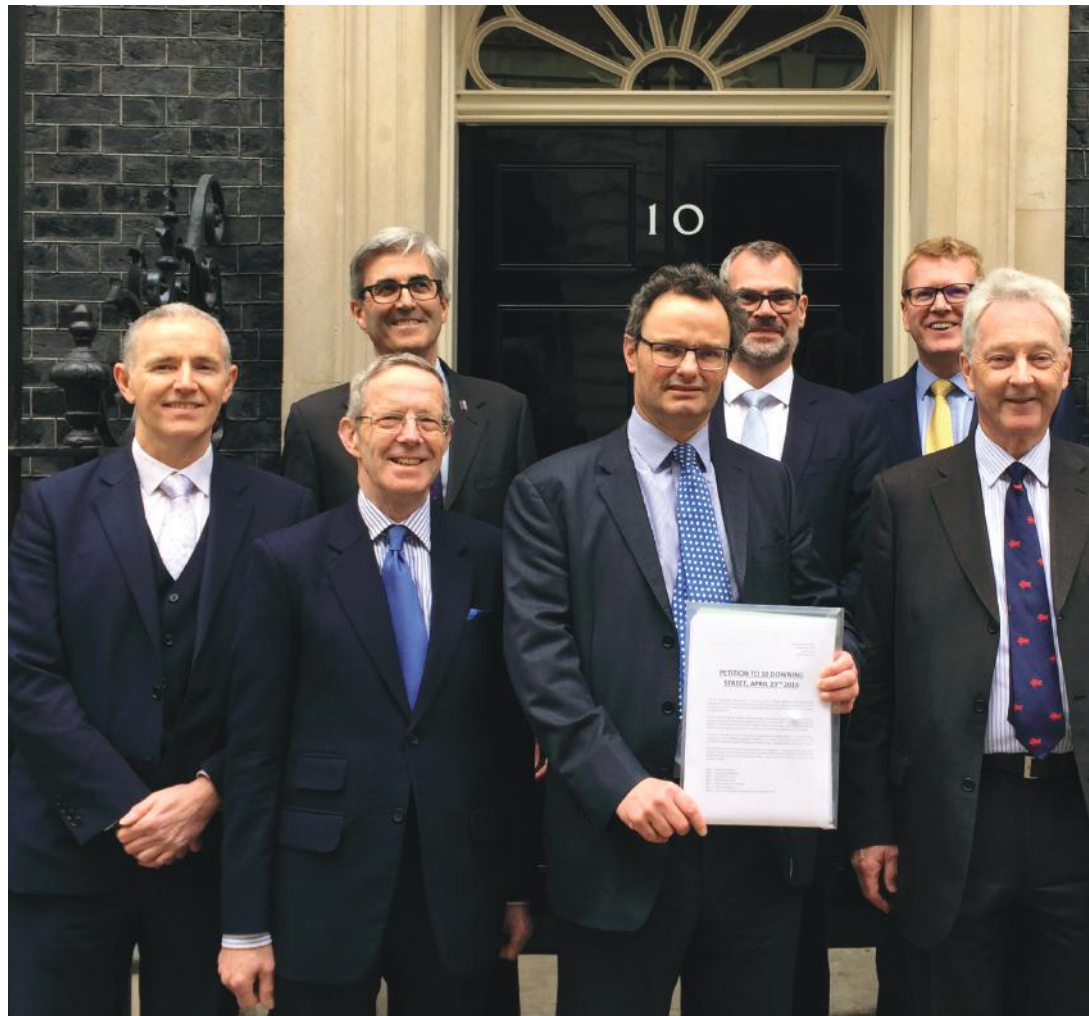
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WELCOME

TO THE JULY ISSUE OF SPECFINISH

As I started to write my welcome message, I was amazed that the 2026 Football World Cup was just around the corner and that, by the time you are reading this, it will already have started and we will have watched the opening games for Scotland and England. Like many of you, as a kid I looked forward to watching the biggest characters and best footballers in the world before heading down to the local park to try and emulate them in a chaotic 20 a side game, or a game of Wembley, where you picked a World Cup team and had to score a goal to get through to the next round, with the last player left being knocked out, all alongside friends and footballing foes.

What always struck me was that, while the winning World Cup teams usually had some of the world's best individual players, they were rarely successful because of individual talent alone. More often, they were the most connected, fluid, and collaborative teams, groups that worked together and understood that collective effort almost always outperforms individual brilliance.

These tournaments always remind us of the importance of teamwork, adaptability, and pulling together towards a common goal, values that are just as important in our industry and day to day work as they are on the football pitch.

These values are clearly demonstrated on page 12 of this issue, as we hear about the FIS Acoustic Classification Scheme which will allow pod manufacturers to submit test data that can be translated into a classification, replacing previously inconsistent approaches to acoustic performance reporting.

We take a look at a new guide from the Building Engineering Services Association to encourage those who commission building work to accelerate the adoption of building safety standards. You can read the full story on page 18.

On page 25, we hear from three FIS members who collaborated on a seamless ceiling installation at the Butlins Centre Stage building in Minehead.



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

P22. Peter Aldous (Centre) with industry leaders presenting a petition on fair payment and retentions to officials at 10 Downing Street, London.

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Iain McIlwee
FIS Chief Executive

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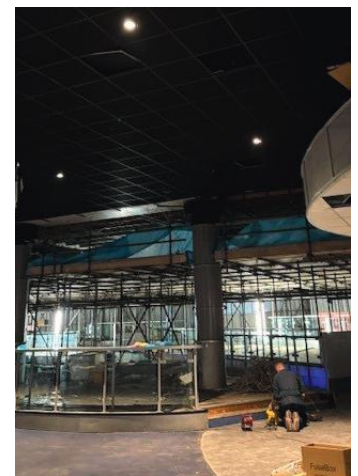


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The Plaasterers' Company announces passing of Past Master Terence Wright

The Worshipful Company of Plaasterers has announced with great sadness the death of **Past Master Terence "Terry" Wright**, who passed away on Thursday 22 April.

Terry had been a dedicated member of The Worshipful Company of Plaasterers since 2009. Over the course of his distinguished Livery career, Terry played an active role and was known for his steady leadership, thoughtful insight, and deep connection to the plastering profession, which formed a significant part of his working life.

Perhaps Terry's most enduring legacy lies in his involvement with the Training Awards, a collaborative event with FIS. A passionate advocate for training and excellence within

the industry, he served as Head of Judges for several years. In this role, he brought not only technical expertise but also warmth and encouragement, engaging personally with nominees and helping to shape the awards into the respected and successful event they are today. In recognition of his long-standing dedication and significant contribution, Terry was honoured at the Training Awards ceremony in November 2025, an acknowledgment that felt was both fitting and well deserved.

To read more visit:
<https://specfinish.co.uk/the-plaasterers-company-announces-passing-of-past-master-terence-wright/>



Wren Insurance Association to cease trading after nearly 40 years

The Wren Insurance Association Limited (Wren), a mutual insurer of Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) for Architects, owned by and for the benefit of its members, recently announced it will conduct a solvent exit. This is a process through which it will cease underwriting new insurance business while remaining solvent and meeting its liabilities including all claims when they fall due.

Since the Grenfell tragedy in 2017, architects across the UK and their professional indemnity insurers have been subject to a high volume of claims in relation to cladding and fire risks. This led to many professional indemnity insurers restricting or withdrawing cover for cladding related risks. However, until 2025 Wren continued to provide cover to its members for cladding claims that was not generally available in the open market.

Due to the high number of claims in relation to cladding received by Wren, primarily in respect of works prior to 2019 it has been necessary to increase Calls and in March 2025 make a Supplementary Call. Since this announcement a significant number of its members have indicated that they will leave Wren. The Wren Board considers that as a result of this, the business lacks the necessary size/scale to offer competitive insurance cover and has taken the difficult decision not to offer renewal terms from 1 July 2026.

Further details on the solvent exit process will be announced as soon as possible and Wren remains committed to providing its members with the highest level of service throughout the solvent exit process.



Middle East conflict casts a dark shadow over 2026-27 forecasts

Conflict in the Middle East and its potential impacts on the global economy, the UK economy and the construction industry cast a dark shadow over the Construction Products Association's (CPA) forecasts for 2026 and 2027. It appears increasingly likely that the second half of this year will see a drop in demand and sharp cost rises. How long the global disruption and high oil and energy prices last remain uncertain at the time of writing, and the CPA has had to make assumptions about the extent and duration of the supply shock.

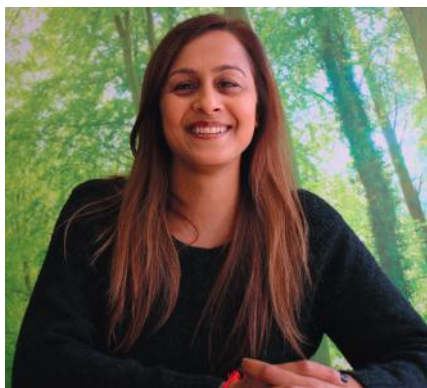
However, based on the CPA's assumptions, construction output is now forecast to fall significantly in 2026, with growth in 2027 also adversely affected. The largest of the conflict impacts are likely to be felt on both the demand and supply side for private housing and private housing repair, maintenance and improvement (rm&i), the two largest construction sectors. In addition, the risks to the forecasts remain heavily skewed to the downside, although potential upside risks remain if the government provides stimulus to boost demand and reduces its additional cost burdens on the construction industry.

In addition, all construction forecasters continue to highlight the major problems with the Office for National Statistics construction output data on which construction forecasts are based, so users should treat the historical data with extreme caution.

To find out more about the CPA's forecast visit:
<https://specfinish.co.uk/middle-east-conflict-casts-a-dark-shadow-over-2026-27-forecasts/>

COMPETENCE IN CONSTRUCTION: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF CSCS

Beena Nana, FIS Head of Skills and Training, discusses the Construction Skills Certification Scheme which is evolving into a digital competence system, helping sectors such as drylining create clearer training, carding, and compliance pathways under the Building Safety Act.



Beena Nana, FIS Head of Skills and Training

The Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) plays a key role in improving competence, safety, and accountability across the construction workforce by providing recognised evidence of training, qualifications, and health and safety knowledge.

With more than two million cards in circulation across 37 Alliance schemes, CSCS is evolving from solely physical cards and visual checks, into a digital-first, competence-focused infrastructure driven by post-Grenfell reforms and the Building Safety Act (BSA).

CSCS Alliance schemes work closely with industry bodies to ensure cards reflect the Skills, Knowledge, Experience and Behaviours (SKEB) required for specific roles, helping translate competence frameworks into practical systems that employers and clients can verify.

For sectors such as finishes and interiors, this shift supports stronger professional standards, clearer career pathways, and greater confidence in workforce competence.

Drylining's route to competence: How FIS is turning building safety reform into site reality

The post-Grenfell construction landscape has transformed the conversation around competence. CSCS cards currently enable individuals to demonstrate they have the appropriate skills and training for their role, usually a qualification and a health and safety test. However, cards and accompanying skills passports will soon adapt to more closely reflect sector

frameworks as necessary, and include a culture of the ongoing development of skills, knowledge, experience, and behaviours.

At the centre of this shift is the requirement for every individual working in construction to demonstrate competence through an appropriate combination of SKEB, the benchmark established under the BSA and championed by the Industry Competence Steering Group.

One of the challenges has been not simply defining competence, but making it work in practice.

Nowhere is this more visible than in drylining, where FIS has developed a clear example of how industry led competence frameworks can be translated into practical, site-ready systems.

Working closely with CSCS Cards as the appropriate Alliance scheme and supported by the Construction Leadership Council and Build UK, FIS has created a structured Route to Competence for drylining that maps occupational standards directly to training pathways, qualifications and carding requirements.

Defining competence is only the beginning

One of the key lessons learned early in the process was that defining SKEB statements alone would not solve the industry's competence challenge.

The real test was whether competence frameworks could be translated into clear progression routes that employers and workers could realistically follow.

To achieve this, FIS focused on a series of practical questions:

- What are the correct entry routes into drylining?
- How does an individual progress from entry level to skilled status?
- What qualifications and evidence are required at each stage?
- Which CSCS card route aligns with drylining competence?
- What happens at card renewal?
- How can experienced workers transition into updated standards?

These questions may appear administrative on the surface, but they go to the heart of workforce reform.

Without clear answers, there is a risk that competence becomes inconsistent, misunderstood or reduced to a paper exercise.

FIS therefore approached the project not simply as a standards exercise, but as a workforce implementation programme.

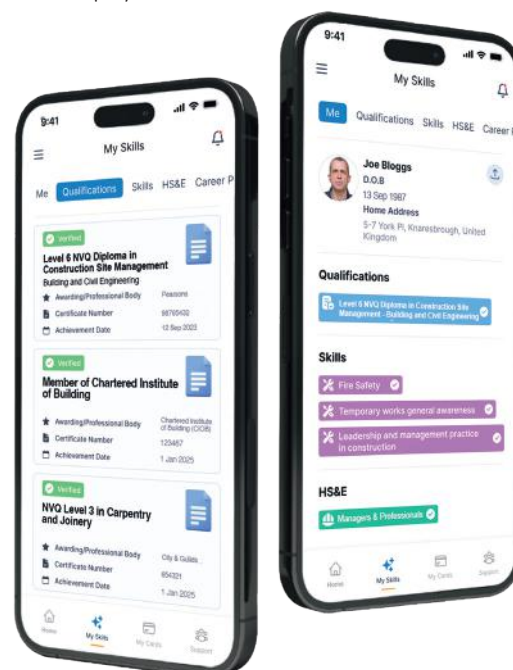
Building a structured route to competence

The first stage involved mapping the SKEB requirements for drylining to define what a competent dryliner should know and demonstrate on site.

FIS recognised there could not be a single route into competence. New entrants may follow apprenticeships or vocational qualifications, while experienced operatives require alternative pathways.

Working with CSCS Cards, FIS developed a structured carding journey aligned to occupational standards, setting out:

- recognised entry routes
 - training and qualification pathways
 - progression to skilled worker status
 - alignment with the appropriate CSCS cards.
- The result is a clearer roadmap for employers and workers. →





Tackling the labourer card problem

One of the most significant aspects of the drylining competence framework is FIS's position on Labourer cards.

The green Labourer card is not typically regarded as the most appropriate pathway for individuals pursuing a career in drylining. Workers are generally expected to start on recognised red CSCS cards that support formal training and development, including Apprentice, Trainee, or Experienced Worker cards.

Historically, many workers entered specialist trades through labouring roles and gained skills informally on site. Under the new framework, however, this may leave workers outside recognised training and assessment routes.

FIS argues that structured progression is essential to maintaining consistent competence standards, while also giving employers, clients, and principal contractors greater assurance that workers are following approved training pathways.

Avoiding the 'Big Bang'

Despite the urgency around competence reform, FIS and CSCS Cards recognised that introducing all changes at once could create confusion, disruption and capacity issues.

Instead, the drylining competence framework is being introduced in phases, allowing agreed measures to be implemented first while more complex elements, such as Continuing Professional Development (CPD), are developed.

This staged approach gives employers time to adapt, allows training providers to build capacity, and enables systems for evidence and verification to be tested effectively.

It also reflects wider industry recognition that competence reform requires practical delivery systems, workforce engagement, and realistic implementation timescales, not regulation alone.

Enhanced renewal and CPD requirements are expected to be fully in place by the end of 2026.

Competence is not a one-off achievement

A major shift within the emerging system is the focus on maintaining competence, not simply achieving it once.

Under the Drylining Route to Competence, skilled card renewal has become a meaningful checkpoint rather than a basic administrative process.

Renewal is set to require:

- Relevant recognised qualification
- Valid CITB Health and Safety and Environment test completed within the previous two years
- Fire Safety training completed within the previous two years

The inclusion of Fire Safety Training reflects the increased focus on fire risk and safety following Grenfell and the BSA.

Looking ahead, CPD is expected to play a greater role in renewals. FIS is currently exploring how proportionate CPD can be evidenced and integrated into systems such as the My CSCS app, while ensuring it remains meaningful rather than a tick-box exercise.

The industry-wide challenges ahead

Although drylining has made significant progress, major challenges remain.

One of the biggest is managing legacy competence, as many experienced workers may not hold qualifications that align with current standards despite having extensive practical expertise. FIS supports transitional arrangements that allow workers to address competence gaps through further training or assessment.

Delivery capacity is another concern. If new training or CPD requirements become mandatory, sufficient provision will be needed nationwide to avoid bottlenecks and workforce shortages.

Consistency also remains critical, with inaccurate occupation titles or testing requirements risking confusion over card eligibility and competence standards. Ongoing collaboration between sector bodies and CSCS Alliance schemes will therefore remain essential.

A blueprint for other sectors?

The drylining case study provides a practical model for the wider construction industry.

The FIS approach demonstrates how competence can be translated into:

- Defined occupational standards
- Structured training pathways
- Clear carding requirements
- Renewal processes
- Ongoing competence management

It also highlights the importance of industry led solutions, developed collaboratively to reflect site realities. This approach is likely to become increasingly important as clients, regulators, and insurers place greater scrutiny on workforce competence.

I spoke to **Sean Kearns**, CSCS Group Chief Executive, who provided an insight into the future direction of the CSCS system, outlining how it is evolving to support a more digital, data driven approach to verifying competence across the construction workforce.



Sean Kearns, CSCS Group Chief Executive

From card scheme to digital infrastructure: What CSCS's next chapter means for the finishes and interiors sector

Sean explained that for much of its 30-year history, the CSCS card was simply a physical pass to site, used to confirm qualifications and health and safety training.

He said: "Today, CSCS is increasingly viewed as a digital skills infrastructure, built around 2.4 million cards across 37 Alliance schemes, combining verified credentials with on-the-ground checking patterns to create powerful workforce data." The BSA has shifted competence from something static, checked visually at a point in time and stored away to something live and verifiable digitally using CSCS Smart Check."

Smart Check: Verification and data-driven intelligence

CSCS Smart Check verifies all 2.4 million CSCS-logoed cards across 37 Alliance schemes, whether physical or digital, and is widely integrated into site access systems. Since 2024, it has processed over 66 million scans, commented Sean.

"Recent upgrades now capture location, site ID, and reasons for card checks, turning Smart Check into an evidence tool that supports the BSA's Golden Thread by showing when and where competence was verified."

"Workforce Insights builds on this data by combining anonymised workforce information with Smart Check activity to map skills, demographics, and gaps across construction and the Built Environment.

"This evidence base is already informing national skills planning and future training investment," he said.

CPD moves to the centre

Sean went on to explained that the third shift focuses on cardholders, with the BSA requiring competence to be current, demonstrable, and based on SKEB. He said: "This is expected to increase the role of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in applications and renewals.

"The My CSCS app, now AI-supported, provides a digital space for workers to apply for or renew cards, as well as store additional qualifications, health and safety records, and CPD activity, creating a CV-style skills passport for employers and clients.

"Items in My Skills are clearly marked as verified or self-uploaded, ensuring transparency around the status of each record."

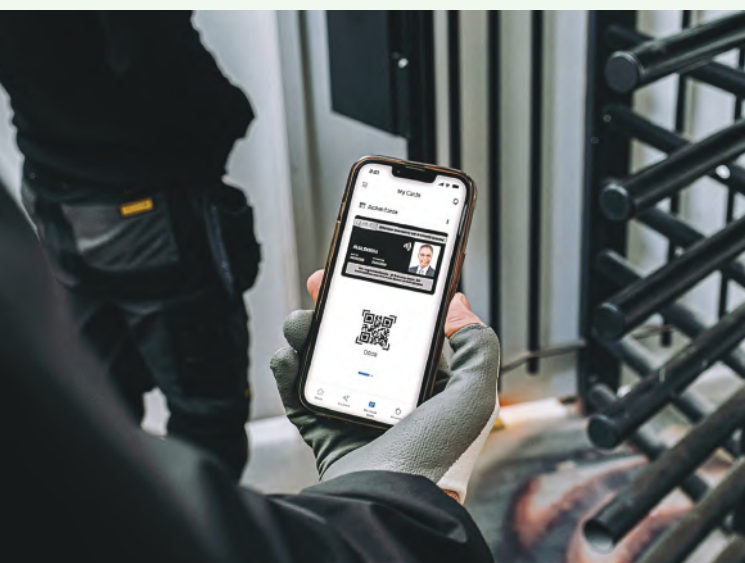
Where FIS CPD fits

FIS already delivers sector specific CPD aligned to its best practice and site guides, shaped by the FIS Working Group members in drylining, ceilings, partitions, operable walls, plastering and steel framed systems. The natural next step and one FIS is actively exploring alongside CSCS, is for FIS-issued CPD to land within My Skills as verified content rather than as a self-certified upload, explained Sean.

"For installers, that means CPD completed through FIS becomes evidence that travels with them: visible to site managers via Smart Check, factored into the workforce picture flowing through to Workforce Insights, and recognised when the card comes up for renewal. For FIS contractor members tendering for fit-out and finishes packages, it means a cleaner, faster route to assembling and proving a competent workforce, with the sector's own training visible inside the same infrastructure main contractors are already checking against.

"The card hasn't gone away. But what sits behind it is now a connected digital infrastructure, which can be of benefit to individuals, contractors and wider industry," he concluded.

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Waste not: How Reutilize is reshaping fabrication

A look at Reutilize, a specialist platform designed to help fabricators redistribute surplus materials, remnants, and offcuts that would otherwise risk being discarded or sent to landfill.



Flavie Lowres, FIS Sustainability Champion

The FIS Sustainability Leadership Group has been running since 2021 and now brings together more than 90 professionals from across the fit-out sector, including manufacturers, distributors and contractors. One of its key areas of focus is reducing waste and scaling up the reuse of construction products in a sector where fit-outs typically last only five to seven years, and often less in fast-moving markets such as London.

Within surface fabrication, the Worktop Fabricators Federation (WFF) is one of the organisations helping to drive that shift. The UK trade body supports higher standards across the sector, with a focus on professionalism, health and safety, and best practice.

Flavie Lowres, FIS Sustainability Champion, speaks to **Nigel Fletcher**, Operations Officer at WFF, about its partnership with Reutilize, and to **Tim Matthews**, Founder of Reutilize and Managing Director at Counter Production, about how the platform works in practice.

WFF drives circular sustainability through Reutilize partnership

One of the Federation's most significant sustainability initiatives is its partnership with Reutilize. The platform addresses a persistent challenge in the sector: large-format stone, quartz and porcelain fabrication often leaves behind high-quality material that is too valuable to waste, but difficult to reuse within a single business.

Historically, those remnants have often accumulated in yards or entered the waste stream, despite remaining suitable for smaller residential and commercial projects. Through Reutilize, WFF members can list surplus materials on a marketplace accessible to approved buyers across the industry.

That helps businesses recover value from stock that might otherwise sit idle, while allowing others to source smaller quantities of premium material without buying full slabs. It also extends the life of materials already in the supply chain, supporting a more circular model for the sector.



Nigel Fletcher, Operations Officer at WFF

An important step forward for the sector

Talking about the initiative, Nigel said: "We are delighted to be able to offer our members this service, helping them clear remnants, reduce landfill waste, and add to their bottom line. It's a win-win. If used correctly, WFF membership costs can be easily recovered through just one or two sales.

"The simplicity of the platform is a large part of its appeal. Fabricators can upload via a CSV template, available remnants directly to the system, allowing others to search by colour, brand, size and location. This creates opportunities for smaller kitchen projects, bathroom installations, repairs, commercial fit-outs and bespoke jobs that do not require a complete slab."

Nigel also pointed to the operational benefit. Many fabricators hold significant volumes of unused material that take up valuable warehouse or yard space, so improving redistribution supports both efficiency and environmental responsibility.

More broadly, the initiative reflects a wider shift across the built environment, where sustainability is increasingly seen not only as a compliance issue, but also as a commercial consideration. Architects, developers, contractors and clients are placing greater emphasis on responsible sourcing, waste reduction and lower-carbon manufacturing.

Nigel explained that the federation's role extends beyond sustainability into training guidance, technical support and the WFF Quality Mark scheme, all aimed at improving professionalism and accountability across the sector. He described the Quality Mark as an independently assessed benchmark for fabricators committed to high standards in workmanship, operational management and health and safety compliance.

He said: "For specifiers and clients, the scheme offers additional confidence when selecting fabrication partners, particularly for larger or more technically demanding projects. Health and safety remains another major priority, particularly because of the risks associated with silica dust exposure during stone fabrication."

"The WFF continues to advocate for improved dust suppression, safer workshop practices and better education across the industry. He also argued that these improvements align naturally with wider sustainability goals, as more accurate fabrication, better planning and right-first-time manufacturing help reduce waste, material loss and rework while improving profitability.

"For smaller independent fabricators, Reutilize offers a practical route into sustainability without major capital investment. Rather than requiring complex new systems or expensive technology, it helps businesses make better use of material already circulating in the market," he said.

Nigel concluded: "As environmental scrutiny continues to increase across the construction and interiors sectors, the ability to demonstrate measurable waste reduction and responsible material management is likely to become increasingly important for businesses operating throughout the supply chain. Through initiatives such as Reutilize, the WFF is helping position the fabrication industry as part of the solution, showing how practical collaboration, improved standards and smarter resource management can contribute to a more sustainable future for the built environment."

<https://worktopfabricators.org/>



Tim Matthews, Managing Director
at Counter Production

Joining the dots: How Reutilize works

Tim explained that Reutilize was first created as an internal tool for Counter Production, a 40-year-old premium Oxfordshire solid surface fabrication business, to address an increasingly common issue raised by customers.

He said: "Every offcut and surplus sheet was logged into a digital stock list, which the production office could search by size, colour, and location. The brief was simple: plan each job using existing stock wherever possible, and only order new sheets when needed.

"Within months, the factory saw a 300% increase in material utilisation and diverted more than a tonne of waste from landfill. Crucially for a fit-out audience, that also translated into fewer skips, better use of working capital and smoother production planning.

"The concept was then scaled up and launched as **Reutilize.co.uk** – a large, searchable, connected database of registered companies' surplus stock, centralised in one convenient place."

The process

- Fabricators, distributors and studios upload offcuts and surplus sheets, including dimensions, colours, finishes and locations.
- Designers, contractors and other fabricators search by project need, filter by region and contact the seller directly to agree price and logistics.
- The platform encourages users to source material already available in the UK market before buying new, turning workshop racks into live, monetisable inventory. Because the platform is location-led, it can also support shorter transport distances. That aligns with growing pressure across the sector to reduce embodied carbon and waste in line with client, planning and corporate Environmental, Social and Governance requirements.

Plugging into the fit-out ecosystem

Tim went on to explain to Flavie, that Reutilize sits alongside other UK initiatives aimed at circular fit-out, including schemes such as CDUK's Vita Nova, which uses Reutilize.co.uk to repurpose its returned or damaged Corian and related materials.

He said: "The platform has expanded beyond solid surface to include stone and engineered stone, with promotion through organisations such as the Worktop Fabricators Federation. For main contractors and interior specialists, this means Reutilize can support a range of finishes in kitchens, washrooms, receptions, and back-of-house spaces – areas where fit-out teams are seeking both differentiation and cost control."

Discussing where specifiers and designers come in, he commented: "To make Reutilize relevant, designers, architects and specifiers are central to making this work. If circular material sources are not written into the specification, they rarely appear in the supply chain. Knowing that there is a usable and searchable resource of materials makes that specification process achievable. You can't specify something you don't know exists, even if you want to."

A practical step towards circular fit-out

Talking about FIS members Tim commented they are already engaging with initiatives such as Project Reuse, which aims to find new homes for salvaged interior products and reduce landfill. In that context, he described Reutilize as a complementary, material-specific tool focused on solid surface, stone and engineered stone offcuts within the wider fit-out supply chain.

He concluded: "No one is pretending this is the single answer to construction waste. Government programmes and clients' net-zero strategies will continue to push for broader change in how projects are procured, delivered and refurbished. But for finishes and interiors specialists looking for practical actions they can take now, logging offcuts and checking Reutilize before ordering new material is a simple, measurable step.

"Ultimately, the platform reframes a familiar question. Instead of asking 'What do we do with all these offcuts?', it asks 'Who else could use them?' For a sector built on coordination and detail, that feels like a very natural way to start closing the loop."

To learn more about Reutilize visit:

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



ACOUSTIC PERFORMANCE OF CONFIGURABLE MEETING PODS

Office pods are flexible workplace spaces, but their acoustic performance is inconsistently tested and reported. FIS Technical Director, **James Parlour**, highlights industry perspectives and the development of a standardised, independently verified classification scheme to enable fair and consistent assessment.



James Parlour, FIS Technical Director

Pods, by definition, are structures used to contain things — in this case, people. Crucially, they provide a temporary space to meet, think, talk, or simply be alone. Studies have shown that dedicated spaces for concentration and collaboration, away from the usual desk environment, can improve productivity. They reduce the risk of distraction and are often sold on the basis that they provide a level of privacy as well. With names such as pods, booths, hives, kiosks, adaptable meeting rooms, and even campers and dens, these spaces evoke a clear sense of their purpose. They also appeal to a generation of workers who experienced similar environments and ways of working during their time in higher education.

Mollie Townsend, Sales Manager at The Meeting Pod Company, said that one of her key criteria when looking at potential employers was, “Can I work flexibly within a space, or am I likely to be tied to a static desk?” It seems that the trend for flexible working space that can be readily adapted is on the rise. A recent study showed that about 80% of all new fit-out projects will contain a “pod” or similar free-standing enclosed space, and, as the same survey suggested that there is 33 million square feet of office space under development, that represents a lot of opportunity.

“People are asking for flexible spaces that are easy to relocate, even ones that can be used outside.

“They want them to include lighting, power, charging points, comms, seating, work surfaces, and even AV screens and cameras. They also want them to have a feeling of privacy, though they can’t always vocalise what that means, especially where open-fronted booths are concerned,” added Mollie.

Compliance

Due to the way pods are integrated into a fit-out, and their shared DNA with some larger furniture items, pods are sometimes understandably specified and procured in the same way as furniture, or under a loose furniture package, and are

sometimes installed outside the oversight of the construction team. This model causes confusion about whether pods have implications for building safety.

This was explored in detail in an article called Approved Document B: Ensuring fire safety in office pods¹, published in the January 2024 issue of SpecFinish, by **Peter Long**, Divisional Fire and Certification Director at Optima Products, with respect to reaction to fire.

FIS have explored this further with the International Underwriting Association (IUA)² to better understand the risks of freestanding pods not being assessed for their impact on Building Regulations and, therefore, regulated works.

Faye Hepburn, Underwriting and Claims Executive at IUA, said: “Whilst there remains some uncertainty about how Building Regulations can and will apply to pods, this does not change the underlying risk profile. Where larger pods are being installed, it is vital that any impact on fire safety is effectively assessed, whether that be directly associated with the pod or indirectly associated with the location and impact of the pod on the Fire Safety Plan. It is critical that these risks are not ignored. Doing so could have potentially harmful safety implications and may impact upon the effective operation of the insurance coverage.”

Acoustic performance of pods

Privacy can mean different things to different people. For example, in a quiet space with little background sound, sound insulation in an enclosed space may be required. Yet, in a busy, bustling space with a higher background noise level, sound absorption inside the pod is enough to reduce sound from conversations to below the sound level outside the pod, and privacy is maintained.

The way in which acoustic claims for larger meeting room pods are made varies. Some use test data for elements of the construction (often incomplete), while others use on-site data, which relies on the environment in which the product was tested and fails to provide comparable data. Either way, the inconsistency has proved difficult for clients to understand and for acousticians to interpret, leading, in some cases, to misleading claims of being 'soundproof', which cannot be evaluated.

In March 2021, FIS formed a Working Group which included Sandy Brown Associates, The University of Salford, Cundall, and several prominent manufacturers of freestanding pods. The first problem we identified is that there is no common methodology for testing and rating larger configurable meeting pods in the same way that there is for fixed partitions, where a specimen is tested according to a standardised method and a single R_w figure is derived in decibels (dB).

There is currently an ISO standard for rating the performance of small pods (ISO 23351-1:2020), which states that the test should be conducted in a reverberation chamber where the size of the pod is limited to no more than 5% of the test room volume, and the sample should be a minimum of 1 m from any wall or slab. Based on the dimensions of typical test facilities in the UK, this means it is not possible to test pods much larger than 11 m³ (in essence, a two-person pod).

Cutting through the noise

The FIS Working Group recognised that, unless this is addressed, claims outdoing competitors will lead to a race to the bottom, confusion in the market, and disappointed users. A new methodology, known as the Acoustic Classification Scheme, was jointly developed by the Working Group that will allow pod manufacturers to submit test data in a variety of forms that can be translated into a classification.

Talking about the Acoustic Classification Scheme **Iain McIlwee**, Chief Executive at FIS, said:

"We have developed the Acoustic Classification Scheme in response to a growing demand from industry, who want to be seen as providing clear, independent and verifiable data, so that specifiers can select products with confidence.

"It's similar to the Acoustic Verification Scheme³ that we developed with Cundall to verify the claims made in the operable and fixed partition sector. It means that specifiers can compare products, knowing that the claims are using a consistent method of test."



Andy Parkin, Global Head of Acoustics at Cundall, added: "As practitioners, we need to know how pods will benefit a space and the people who use them. By their nature, pods have a variety of shapes, sizes and compositions; some are large enough for a group, some are small enough for one person; some have a lid with ventilation, some are open-topped and fronted. Because of this variety, the acoustic benefit will depend not just on the pod location relative to other activities but also on their orientation.

"There is currently no standardised method of determining the in-situ acoustic benefit of pods in their various orientations and configurations, which means that we cannot give our clients all the information they need.

"By standardising an assessment method which will give information on pod performance, taking into account the way they are installed and used, this gives invaluable information to practitioners who advise clients on the effective use of workplaces."

Ian Strangward, Managing Director at Architectural Wallsz and former Chair of the FIS Partitions, Pods & Doors Working Group, said: "COVID had a huge influence on the workplace. We are working and communicating more remotely, and when we are in the office, we are looking for enclosed, secure spaces where we won't be disturbed. I think that ventilation and easy-to-clean, wipe-down surfaces will be important too as we get back to working in offices."

The FIS Acoustic Classification Scheme for configurable pods will align with ISO 23351-1:2020 Acoustics – Measurement of speech level reduction of furniture ensembles and enclosures – Part 1: Laboratory method, and $D_{s,A}$ which is consistent with the market and more accurately accounts for pod acoustics, not room acoustics. This will allow an equal and fair comparison between the performance data for all pods, regardless of size.

The acoustic classification of meeting pods aims to classify the performance based on airborne sound insulation values (R_w) of the five elements (four walls and a ceiling) or a site test ($D_{nT,w}$). The data will be analysed by either Cundall and/or Sandy Brown and then verified by the other to ensure robustness.

The scheme will include registration and listing of the results on the FIS website with a summary report for acousticians and access to a unique logo for manufacturers. The logo will indicate to an acoustician that there is data behind the classification allowing the acoustician to include the pods in their model and so predict a more accurate soundscape.

If you would like to consider having your products verified by the Acoustic Classification Scheme, please contact **jamesparlour@thefis.org** to discuss this further.

Source

1. https://heyzine.com/flip-book/SpecFinish_Jan24.html#page/10
2. www.iaa.co.uk/
3. <https://www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/acoustic-classification-and-verification-scheme/>

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT: HOW CONTRACTOR DESIGN PORTIONS NEED TO IMPROVE

Iain McIlwee, Chief Executive, Finishes and Interiors Sector, shares with us his thoughts on the recent Construction Quality Improvement Collaborative report which finds Contractor Design Portions are often misused to shift risk, harming design quality. It calls for earlier involvement, clearer responsibility, and a move away from lowest-price procurement to improve outcomes.



Iain McIlwee, Chief Executive, Finishes and Interiors Sector

I was interested to read the recent Construction Quality Improvement Collaborative (CQIC) report on Improving the Use of Contractor Design Portions. There were no surprises. The report paints a clear picture of an industry wrestling with ambiguity, late decisions, and misplaced risk. Drawing on a survey with responses from across Scotland's construction sector, it concludes that Contractor Design Portions (CDPs) are too often used in ways that undermine both design quality and compliance. It does, however, add vital data and calls for cultural and procedural change when it comes to design in construction.

Reports messages

At the heart of the report is a simple message: CDPs should only be used where genuine specialist design input is needed, not as a mechanism for shifting commercial or programme risk down the supply chain. Using CDPs to plug gaps left by incomplete early design leads to

confusion, misalignment, and, ultimately, poorer-quality buildings. The report sets down the mechanisms of late delegation and ill-defined responsibilities that routinely place contractors in impossible positions, often long after key design assumptions are fixed.

CQIC emphasises the need for early identification of any portion of work that may require specialist design, ideally during the appointment of the design team and certainly before the end of RIBA Stage 3. Personally, I would advocate before Stage 3 begins; what we constantly see is that specialists are introduced late, design clarity suffers, coordination issues multiply, and the likelihood of costly or unsafe late-stage redesign increases.

Clarity of responsibility is another recurring theme. The report highlights the need for detailed Design Responsibility Matrices that map out, in unambiguous terms, who produces what, when, and to what level of detail. For FIS members, this is familiar territory: the lack of a properly structured responsibility framework remains one of the most significant challenges in the delivery of fit-out and interiors work. Too often, interiors specialists inherit unclear or contradictory expectations, with performance requirements and safety-critical interfaces loosely defined or scattered across disparate documents. The CQIC's call for a disciplined, universally adopted responsibility matrix aligns directly with FIS's own guidance and risk management approach.

Procurement and industry barriers

Ultimately, the report makes it clear that CDP design must progress alongside the

wider project design, not after it. The report is explicit that CDP work should be completed before Stage 5 and fully integrated into regulatory submissions. In practice, this means the days of "design development during construction" must finally be put behind us. The CQIC also stresses the importance of competence checks and comprehensive tender information. Specialists cannot deliver robust designs if they are invited to price from incomplete or inconsistent tender packs. How can you responsibly procure or bid for work if there is no clear chain of custody, responsibility is confused, and information is missing? How can anyone genuinely verify competence in this muddle, where duties are not clear?

Underlying all of this is an acknowledgment of the systemic failures that sit above project-level decisions. Survey respondents identified lowest-price procurement, unsuitable procurement routes, restricted design fees, and entrenched behaviours as the biggest obstacles to change. This reflects another long-running FIS concern: that lowest-price procurement and unrealistic deliverables push skilled contractors into risk-laden bids, leading to a race to the bottom that harms quality across the entire supply chain. Without adequate time, fees, and early information, even the best-intentioned teams will struggle to deliver the coordinated, compliant designs that modern buildings require. The CQIC report reinforces that more realistic fee structures, better programme planning, and a shift away from adversarial procurement are essential to improving outcomes.

In summary

Taken together, the CQIC recommendations offer a roadmap for a more coherent, transparent and quality-focused approach to Contractor Design Portions, one based on early clarity, competent design development, structured responsibility and genuine collaboration. For FIS and its members, the report serves not only as validation of long-standing concerns but as a welcome opportunity to build momentum for wider industry reform. If embraced, it has the potential to transform the culture of design coordination, reduce the risks that currently fall disproportionately on specialist contractors, and ultimately deliver safer, higher-quality buildings.

Iain asked two industry leaders, who are also Co-chairs of CQIC, **Colin Campbell**, Associate Director at Scottish Futures Trust and **Iain Kent**, Commercial Director at Morgan Sindall Construction, for their thoughts on the report. This is what they had to say.



Colin Campbell, Associate Director at Scottish Futures Trust and Co-chair of CQIC

Colin explained that the CQIC is a campaign which is striving to create a sustainable quality culture, one where quality is at the heart of decision making at all stages of construction projects. It was established in the period just after the Grenfell tragedy and the publication of the report into the Edinburgh Schools issues after the collapse of the wall at Oxfangs Primary School. It was realised

that something needed to change if such tragedies and problems were to be prevented from happening again.

He said: "CQIC is supported by both public and private sectors and takes the approach that everyone involved in construction – clients, consultants, designers, contractors and the supply-chain – all have an important part to play in delivering safe, compliant and quality buildings.

"At the heart of the CQIC is a Charter to which all organisations involved in construction are invited to commit. To date 147 organisations from all parts of the sector have committed.

"The CQIC seeks to support the sector to adopt best practice and to fulfil the commitments they make in the Charter by providing guidance. One of the key areas identified as having a significant impact on quality and compliance was the way in which CDP was being used."

He went on to explain that insight into how CDP was being used, and might better be used, was obtained through the survey that was conducted. The 381 responses to the survey came from across the sector and gave valuable insight into how its use might be improved to support the achievement of better quality.

"The Recommendations document provides a route map to how that might be achieved.

"The challenge is in how it can be implemented. For it to be effective it will need all parties to work out how they can include the Recommendations in the delivery of their projects," said Colin.

Concluding he said: "One of the key mantras of CQIC is that there must be a well-planned, well managed and pro-active approach to quality during all stages of a construction project, including briefing, design, procurement and execution of the construction work. If the Recommendations are adopted and implemented, better outcomes will be achieved for all parties in terms of compliance, quality and, importantly, commercially."



Iain Kent, Commercial Director at Morgan Sindall Construction and Co-Chair of CQIC

It was heartening to read Iain McIlwee's article recognising and supporting many of the Recommendations for improving the use of CDP. Iain refers to many of the challenges currently observed within the industry/sector relating to the inappropriate use of CDP and reflects on the opportunities these Recommendations provide to address them, explained Iain Kent.

Iain Kent said: "Whilst the Recommendations are based upon the industry wide survey undertaken two years ago, there is still considerable trepidation in publishing a series of recommendation's and waiting for the industry and sector response.

"Thus far the response has been generally positive, with recognition that the use of CDP does need to change and that the Recommendations go some way to providing a route map for change.

"Much of the discussion following the publication is how will the barriers to change be addressed to enable the Recommendations to be implemented? The starting point for this is behavioural change, where we all take responsibility for implementing the Recommendations and challenging the behaviours of others to do likewise."

He went on to say: "The CQIC continue to work with other groups engaged in the Scottish Construction Accord's Transformation Action Plan to address some of the barriers to change and there is a recognition that change needs to happen."

"The CQIC have also been working closely with Scottish Government's Building Standards Division on the Recommendations as they support and align with the forthcoming Compliance Plan Approach (CPA) to Building Standards.

"The implementation of the CPA will require many of the Recommendations to be adopted to meet the requirements of the pro-active and pre-emptive requirements of the CPA. In Scotland elements of construction work cannot start until a Building Warrant is in place for that work and this requires the design to be submitted, including CDP," commented Iain Kent.

"It will only be through a combination of these approaches that we will deliver an improvement in the use of CDP, however organisations such as the FIS recognising and supporting the need for change certainly helps," he concluded.

To learn more about Construction Quality Improvement Collaborative visit: <https://cqic.org.uk/>



To read the report in full visit: https://cqic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/CQIC_5-small.pdf

SELFLESSLY BUILDING THE FUTURE

Jade Sandhu, Group People Director at Measom, speaks to **David Crowson**, Editor, about her impressive rise within the business, her positive impact on the wider sector, and the importance she places on people and site-based experience in shaping an understanding of construction, as well as attracting and developing the next generation of talent.



Jade Sandhu, Group People Director at Measom

When speaking to Jade, it was clear from the outset that she is a very confident young woman with a strong passion for people and a clear commitment to developing talent, widening opportunity, and strengthening long-term career pathways in our sector.

Jade explained to me that when she joined Measom in 2021 as a Human Resources (HR) Assistant straight out of university, she knew very little about the construction industry. However, having already completed a placement year with the retailer Joules, she had already discovered the value of practical experience and developed a passion for working with people.

She said: "Like many people outside the industry, I had little understanding of what drylining involved or the role it plays in modern construction."

Learning from the ground up

Jade recalled that one of her first experiences on site was visiting Battersea Power Station with the Managing Director at Measom, **Andrew Measom**. As someone who had never worked in construction before, she remembers feeling slightly overwhelmed by the scale of the project. She said: "What struck me most, however, was not the building itself but the sheer number of skilled people working together to make it happen. Seeing the coordination, expertise and craftsmanship involved, it was impossible not to be impressed."

"The visit to Battersea Power Station also taught me an important lesson that has stayed with me throughout my career.

Construction businesses are built on people, and if you want to understand the business properly, you need to spend time where the work happens. The best learning comes from walking projects, speaking to operatives and understanding the realities faced by operational teams. Only then can you truly appreciate what our industry does and the people who make it happen."

Jade explained that, less than five years later, she became the Group People Director and that the journey has reinforced her belief that construction offers genuine opportunities for those who are willing to learn, ask questions and embrace new challenges.

She noted that throughout her career, her focus has always been on people. She said: "Early on, I learned the value of asking questions and putting your hand up for challenging tasks. Growth happens outside your comfort zone, and it is a principle I have tried to apply throughout my career while encouraging others to do the same."

Building awareness and talent across all backgrounds

Jade and I discussed her thoughts and solutions to the challenges facing the industry. She explained that when she entered the finishes and interiors sector as an outsider, she quickly became aware of a challenge that often goes unnoticed. Most people know what a plumber, electrician, or bricklayer does; very few understand what a dryliner does. Yet drylining is fundamental to modern construction and plays a critical role in the successful delivery of projects.

She said: "That lack of awareness has consequences. When young people do not understand a profession, they are unlikely to consider it as a career. At the same time, our sector continues to face significant workforce shortages."

"From a people development perspective, the challenge is not simply attracting talent; it is raising awareness of the opportunities available within our sector and making career pathways more visible, accessible, and easier to understand."

"My passion for addressing these challenges extends beyond my role at Measom. As Chair of the FIS Skills Board, I

work alongside employers, manufacturers, training providers, and industry stakeholders to develop practical solutions to the skills challenges facing our sector. This experience has reinforced my belief that attracting, developing, and retaining talent requires collective action across the industry"

Jade recalled that one of the projects she is most proud of has been helping to develop apprenticeship pathways within the drylining sector. She said: "Apprenticeships remain one of the most effective ways of attracting and developing new talent within the industry, despite ongoing challenges such as funding constraints, retention difficulties, and changing perceptions among young people."

"However, attracting people is only part of the solution. We also need to show them where their careers can lead. This is why, at Measom, we have worked to develop a Level 3 Drylining Apprenticeship programme. By bringing together employers, manufacturers, and industry bodies, we have demonstrated a genuine appetite for creating clearer progression routes and developing the future supervisors, managers, and leaders our sector needs."

"Construction should not be viewed as a fallback option. It is a highly skilled profession that offers significant opportunities for development, progression, and long-term career success."

Jade commented that alongside apprenticeships, she had also explored alternative talent pools, saying: "Some of these initiatives had delivered encouraging results, while others have highlighted just how much work remains to be done."

Explaining more about the alternative talent pools, she commented that she had interviewed prisoners preparing for release and believes this remains one of construction's most underutilised pools.

She had also been involved in initiatives designed to encourage more women into drylining.

Talking about these initiatives, she said: "Not every work trial resulted in long-term employment, but those experiences reinforced the importance of understanding and addressing the practical barriers people face before entering our industry."

PEOPLE IN BRIEF



Jade participating in an FIS panel discussion

“For example, when discussing how to attract more women into drylining, it is important to acknowledge practical considerations such as manual handling requirements, site welfare facilities and workplace culture. If we are serious about widening participation, we need practical solutions that remove barriers rather than well-intentioned assumptions.”

Passionately, Jade described one of the most significant changes she had witnessed during her time in the sector as the shift in expectations around recruitment and career development. She said: “Today’s workforce, particularly younger generations, increasingly seek purpose, progression and development opportunities alongside a competitive salary.”

“As employers, we have had to adapt our approach by investing more heavily in engagement, communication, and structured development pathways. The positive outcome is that more businesses are beginning to focus on long-term talent development rather than simply filling vacancies.”

The challenge we must solve next: AI, apprenticeships and the next generation

We discussed how much of the conversation around construction’s skills shortage focuses on what the sector lacks. However, Jade strongly believes we also need to consider what it offers.

Jade explained that, as someone who started her career in HR, she can already see how technology is changing many of the tasks that traditionally formed part of entry-level office roles. At the same time that skilled labour shortages continue to grow, artificial intelligence is beginning to reshape the wider employment market.

Many of the roles young people have traditionally viewed as career starting points — such as onboarding, data entry, and administrative support — are likely to be significantly transformed in the coming years.

“I worry that young people are not always being given a full picture of how

technology may reshape traditional career routes and entry-level opportunities.

“In this context, skilled trades offer something incredibly valuable: stability, tangible skills, long-term demand and opportunities for meaningful career progression.

“This convergence of AI disruption and labour shortages presents a significant opportunity for our sector. It is one of the reasons I am so passionate about our Level 3 Drylining apprenticeship programme, which helps create a structured route into a skilled and rewarding career.

“By showing young people the journey ahead, we can make construction a compelling alternative to increasingly uncertain white-collar career paths,” commented Jade.

She however, noted this challenge extends beyond employers. Parents, teachers and policymakers must also play their part, valuing apprenticeships as highly as university degrees. If we are serious about addressing future skills shortages, we need to rebuild the status of apprenticeships and skilled trades. At a time when many young people are questioning traditional career routes, construction has an opportunity to present a compelling alternative.

People are the future of drylining

Jade concluded by saying: “Almost five years after stepping onto my first construction site, I still occasionally think back to that experience and how little I understood about the industry at the time. I remain convinced that our industry’s greatest challenge is also its greatest opportunity.

“Buildings, technology and materials will continue to evolve, but our success will always depend on people.

Whether through apprenticeships, alternative recruitment pathways or greater industry awareness, the future of drylining will be determined by how effectively we invest in the next generation. It is a challenge I am proud to help solve.”



Wates construction appoints George Mosey as Managing Director

As Managing Director for Wates Construction London, George will lead the business’s strategy and operations. His primary focus is performance excellence and ensuring that translates into positive outcomes for customers. This builds on his work to date in Wates Construction, through the continuous improvement programme he introduced in 2025 and will continue to drive forward.

www.wates.co.uk/services/wates-construction



New marketing head for construction products group

Performance Technology Group has appointed Heidi O’Shea as Head of Marketing. Heidi will drive marketing strategy for the Group’s five specialist construction products brands AIM (Acoustic Insulation Manufacturing), CMS Danskin Acoustics, Euroform, IMS (Insulation Machining Services) and Ockwells.

Her remit is to elevate brand positioning and marketing effectiveness to strengthen customer engagement and drive commercial growth.

www.performancetechnologygroup.com



AIM adds to specification strength with two appointments

AIM Acoustics & Insulation Manufacturing has expanded its sales and specification team with two new appointments. Karen Viccars has joined as Specification Manager for the Greater London area and Campbell McGregor as Specification and Sales Manager for Scotland and Northern England.

Karen and Campbell bring considerable experience. Karen’s career in the construction industry spans over 30 years. Involved in facades and rainscreen cladding for commercial and residential high-rise buildings, she has liaised closely with architects to support them in the face of new safety regulations.

www.aimlimited.co.uk

THE CLIENT'S GUIDE TO THE BUILDING SAFETY ACT

A new guide from the Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) has been launched to encourage those who commission building work to accelerate the adoption of building safety standards.

On 5 May, the Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) and a coalition of industry bodies launched "The Client's Guide to the Building Safety Act" at the Houses of Parliament.

In this article, BESA explore what the legislation means in practice, highlighting the responsibilities of "The Client" under the Building Safety Act (BSA) and the steps needed to support safer building projects from start to finish.

Why this guide matters and how it will help you

If you are a client, you are in a powerful position. You shape the culture, competence and compliance of every building project you commission. The BSA now formally recognises this, placing legal duties on clients to lead from the front.

This guide has been developed to help clients understand their legal responsibilities under the BSA, make confident and informed decisions from the earliest stages of a project, and protect their investment, reputation and the people using their buildings.

The culture you set from day one, your expectations, priorities and behaviour have a direct influence on whether safe, compliant outcomes are achieved. Clients who lead with integrity, clarity and accountability create the conditions for their teams to succeed. Whether you are delivering housing, healthcare, commercial space or infrastructure, the message is the same: You can't outsource compliance.

But with the right approach, support and understanding, you can lead safe, successful projects that stand the test of time.

In this article we focus on who is the client, what are the client's main duties and their legal responsibilities for all buildings including what a client needs to know and do in six stages of the project.

Who is the client?

If you are a building owner, a developer or commissioning building work, you're "The Client" under the BSA.

Under the BSA, being 'the Client' comes with serious legal duties – you cannot pass them on.

Clients now hold more responsibility than ever before. Knowing your role is critical to keeping people safe, staying compliant, and protecting your investment.



THE CLIENT'S GUIDE TO THE BUILDING SAFETY ACT

Mitigating risk, protecting your reputation and safeguarding your investment.



The client: Defined

- The Client is the person or organisation who commissions building work – whether it is design, construction, refurbishment or ongoing maintenance.
- You are a Dutyholder under the BSA. That means you have clear legal responsibilities for building safety throughout the lifecycle of your project.
- Building work includes erecting or extending a building, providing or extending a controlled service or fitting in connection with a building, and the material alteration of a building or a controlled service or fitting.
- Controlled services or fittings include a service or fitting subject to Schedule 1 (of the Building Regulations) requirements in respect of sanitation, hot water safety, water efficiency, drainage and waste disposal, combustion appliances and fuel storage, conservation of fuel or power, and electrical safety.

What kind of clients is this work targeting?

The role of the Client applies to many different people and organisations, which include: Developers (Public and Private), building owners, housebuilders and developer contractors.

The role of service providers

Client advisors, architects, contractors, facilities managers and estate managers are not classed as a ‘Client Dutyholder’ under the BSA. They may take the role of Dutyholder in the capacity of a principal contractor, contractor, principal designer, designer or principal accountable person.

What are the client’s main duties?

As a Client under the BSA, you are responsible for creating the right conditions for safe, compliant delivery – from concept through to completion. Here is what your main duties include:

Set up the project for success from the start

You must make suitable arrangements for planning, managing, and monitoring the project – including allocating enough time and resource to meet safety and regulatory requirements.

This involves you choosing competent teams (with the right skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours), ensuring those you appoint have systems in place to meet building regulation duties.

You must remember to appoint key Dutyholders for design and construction, share relevant information with your team, access the right expertise, collaborate with other Dutyholders and your legal responsibilities for all buildings.

Legal responsibilities for all (not just higher-risk) buildings

Whether you are working on a commercial building, public facility, or high-rise development, if you are the Client, you have specific, non-transferable responsibilities under the BSA.

From small-scale projects to the tallest buildings, **ANY** building work requiring Building Regulations approval is covered.

Here is what you need to know and do at each stage of the project

1. Legal duties and compliance responsibilities

- As a Dutyholder under the BSA – and that means you are legally accountable for compliance with building regulations.
- You must appoint competent professionals – including the Principal Designer and Principal Contractor – who meet the required regulatory competence criteria.
- You are responsible for ensuring that all building work is delivered to the required safety and building standards.
- You must keep accurate records and documentation to demonstrate compliance.
- Your level of oversight should be proportionate to the risk and complexity of the project. Understand when extra checks, independent review or specialist advice is appropriate, and when competent professionals should be given autonomy within agreed parameters.

2. Planning and design stage responsibilities

- **Appoint the right people:** Appoint a Principal Designer and Principal Contractor to oversee Building Regulation compliance.

- **Follow Building Regulations:** Ensure designs comply and secure necessary approval from the Local Authority Building Control.
- **Manage design risks:** Identify potential hazards early and plan how to reduce them.
- **Provide clear information:** Give designers and contractors a clear project brief, including expectations around meeting standards.
- **Keep records:** Document decisions, risk assessments, and approvals.
- **Check compliance:** Monitor that work meets relevant requirements.
- **Coordinate teams:** Make sure everyone communicates and works together to avoid conflicts or safety issues.

3. Procurement and contractor selection

- Do not just go with the lowest bidder. Contractors must be selected based on competence and organisational capability, not lowest cost.
- The Principal Designer, Principal Contractor and specialist supply chain members must all have the required Skills, Knowledge, Experience and Behaviours (SKEB).
- Your procurement process must align with building safety compliance standards – it’s not just about price, it is about safety and quality before cost.
- Keep a clear record of why you selected each ‘dutyholder’. You may be asked in the future to explain your decision-making process.
- Check that your main contractor has assessed the competence of their subcontractors and that they meet compliance standards.

4. Questions you should be asking your contractors

- How does your organisation demonstrate capability to deliver works in line with relevant requirements including trade association membership?
- How do you measure and assess the competence (SKEB) of your employed and subcontracted workforce? (e.g. qualifications, training records, relevant experience).
- What systems do you have in place to monitor building safety risks during delivery?
- How do you co-operate and share information with other relevant dutyholders?
- Have you successfully delivered similar projects and can you provide references?
- How do you record and evidence safety and compliance decisions made during procurement and delivery?

Successful projects rely on constructive relationships. Clients should promote open dialogue, encourage challenge, and establish shared goals across the design and construction team. A culture of collaboration reduces conflict, improves decision-making and supports compliance. →

“Raising awareness and improving understanding across the industry is essential if we are to drive meaningful change and deliver safer buildings together.”

5. Construction and on-site responsibilities

- **Oversee safe construction:** Ensure work is carried out safely, to specification, and in line with Building Regulations.
- **Appoint and manage competent teams:** Make sure the Principal Contractor and supply chain are competent for the tasked work.
- **Monitor progress and risks:** Keep track of site activities, address hazards promptly, and maintain records of inspections and decisions.
- **Embed quality assurance from day one:** Quality assurance is not only about meeting regulatory standards; it underpins the long-term performance and value of your building. Ensure verification, testing and inspection processes are in place from the outset.

6. Post-construction and occupation responsibilities

- **Keep the building safe:** Use the industry standard, SFG20, to ensure that the building fabric and its assets are appropriately maintained and continue to meet all statutory requirements.
- **Use competent teams:** Appoint qualified facilities managers to maintain and inspect the building.
- **Keep records:** Keep maintenance logs and safety information up to date.
- **Act on risks:** Deal promptly with hazards or defects that could affect occupants. Compliance is not optional and the stakes are high. By understanding and fulfilling these duties, you will protect the people using your buildings, stay on the right side of the law, improve build quality and safeguard your investment.

The guide also discusses, **HigherRisk Buildings** – Specific duties for the clients, if your project involves a HigherRisk Building (HRB), you have additional legal duties beyond the standard requirements. You must: Follow the Gateway process, engage competent dutyholders, maintain the Golden Thread, develop the Construction Control Plan, report safety occurrences, change control, register the building, prepare a safety case and ongoing monitoring and maintenance.

What happens if you get it wrong?

non-compliance has serious consequences including regulatory action from the Building Safety Regulator, financial penalties and criminal prosecution.

What makes a client compliant? The message is simple: the regulator must do its part, but so must the industry. Poor-quality submissions hold everyone back. They explore the reality of poor applications and how compliant clients can avoid pitfalls by making sure their applications are complete, competent, and supported by evidence.



David Frise, Chief Executive at BESA at the Parliamentary launch

Discussing the Parliamentary launch of the guide, **David Frise**, Chief Executive at the BESA, said: "It was great to see so many industry leaders come together to support this important initiative and reinforce the role of clients in delivering safer, compliant buildings.

"It is important that the Guide is shared widely, particularly with clients, colleagues, supply chain partners and stakeholders who have responsibilities under the BSA. Raising awareness and improving understanding across the industry is essential if we are to drive meaningful change and deliver safer buildings together."



Centre of the picture is Iain McIlwee, FIS Chief Executive in discussion with other visitors at the launch

Iain McIlwee, FIS Chief Executive, who attended the launch said: "This is an excellent and important piece of work that reminds us the BSA isn't just about changing the way we conduct work, but also how we commission work. It was great to be here for the launch and we will do all we can to support BESA in championing this document and the message that goes with it into the market"

To download the BESA Guide visit: <https://www.thebesa.com/clients-guide-building-safety-act> www.thebesa.com

FIS BUILDING SAFETY ACT TOOLKIT

FIS has developed a Building Safety Act Toolkit to provide a practical industry-focused overview of how the UK's Building Safety Act 2022 is reshaping construction compliance, accountability, and fire safety management across the finishes and interiors sector.

The toolkit provides FIS members with:

1. guidance documents
2. competency frameworks
3. template policies
4. legal support
5. training modules
6. practical compliance resources

Access the Toolkit at:

<https://www.thefis.org/knowledge-hub/technical/fire-protection/building-safety-act/>

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IS TIME UP FOR RETENTIONS AND LATE PAYMENT AS FREE CREDIT?

The construction supply chain celebrates as Ministers announce the introduction of legislation to tackle late payments and protect small businesses.

In May, Ministers introduced a landmark Bill aimed at ending the scourge of late payment and setting clear boundaries around payment practices. The Commercial Payments Bill¹ was introduced in the House of Lords on 19 May. The aim is to strengthen payment discipline across the UK economy by imposing maximum payment periods, making statutory interest on late payments mandatory, and banning retention clauses in construction contracts.

The Bill marks the toughest crackdown on late payment in a generation, putting a clear duty on large firms to pay smaller suppliers on time and giving small businesses the certainty they need to continue investing, supporting jobs and growing their communities.

Government is responding to evidence that late payments cause 38 businesses to close every single day. Construction data from FIS shows that 58% specialists

supplying major house builders are stressed about payment most of the time. These businesses are forced to spend hours chasing invoices instead of running their businesses, putting jobs, livelihoods and health at risk. They are also denied of the vital funding and confidence needed to invest in people and innovation.

Sweeping reforms to improve fairness and cashflow

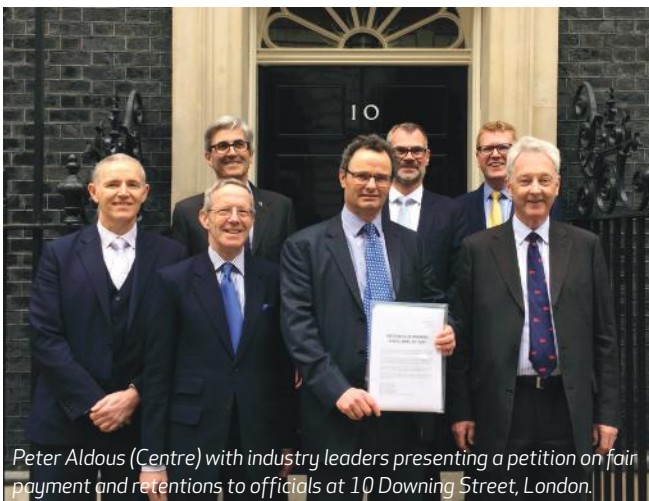
The Bill has the potential to fundamentally change payment practices, putting an end to excessive delays and unfair practices that hit small firms hardest. Reforms include a clear 60-day cap on payment terms on all large firms paying smaller suppliers, mandatory interest on late payments set at 8% above the Bank of England base rate, and a ban on the practice of withholding retention payments under construction contracts.



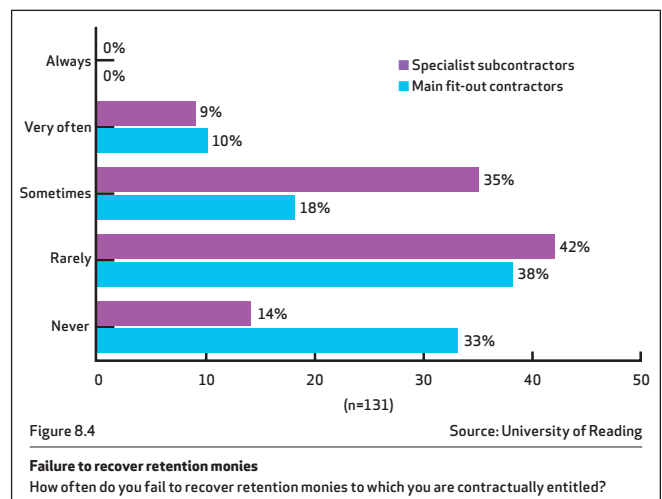
This latter part will be music to the ears of many in the construction supply chain who have been campaigning for retention reform for decades. In his recent speech at the FIS Contractors Awards, FIS, Chief Executive, **Iain McIlwee**, paid tribute to **Peter Aldous**, who attended as Guest of Honour. The Aldous Bill, introduced by Peter during his time as an MP in 2019, sought to tackle retentions head on. Peter garnered significant support from FIS, other specialist trade bodies and industry representatives, but a period of political and social instability, followed by a General Election, saw him lose his seat before the Bill could be introduced.

Iain noted that Peter's efforts provided the sector with a rallying point and a sense of hope, and that this latest iteration would not have been possible without his efforts.

Iain also thanked **Professor Stuart Green**, who provided valuable data through the Reading Report on both retention and late payment in the finishes and interiors sector.



Peter Aldous (Centre) with industry leaders presenting a petition on fair payment and retentions to officials at 10 Downing Street, London.





Department for International Trade



Sam Beer,
Legal Director
Construction
and Engineering
at Hill Dickinson

A lawyer's perspective

Taking a legal eye to the Bill, **Sam Beer**, Legal Director Construction and Engineering at Hill Dickinson, says: For the construction sector, the Bill's provisions are best characterised as a continuation of the ongoing battle to tackle and improve cashflow in the industry.

Overview of key changes

The following are the headline points to note from the Bill relating to construction contracts:

1. When the Bill comes into force it is currently intended that it will be named "**The Commercial Payments Act**".
2. The Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 will be renamed the **Commercial Payments and Interest on Late Payment Act 1998** (CPILPA 1998).
3. The bill seeks to amend various legislation including:
 - a. CPILPA 1998;
 - b. The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the **Construction Act**); and
 - c. The Enterprise Act 2016.
4. CPILPA will be amended so the final date for payment for construction contracts must be within the permitted period (i.e. if public authority 30 days, otherwise 60 days). There are exceptions including advance payment, transitional retained

sum and if the Procurement Act applies. CPILPA will include meanings of terms relating to construction contracts and the Construction Act (s110 and s110B) are also amended to reflect this period.

5. CPILPA will provide that a term that purports to exclude or vary the right to statutory interest (currently 8% plus Bank of England base rate) will be void.
6. Amendments to the CPILPA and Construction Act will **not** apply to contracts entered into before the date the amendments come into force. So has prospective effect only.
7. The Construction Act will be amended to provide for a ban on the use of retention (see below).
8. There are further proposed amendments to the Construction Act in Schedule 2, Part 1 to s110B (default payment notices), s111 (requirement to pay notified sum) and s116 (reckoning periods of time).

Retentions

The Bill's provisions in respect of retentions, when in force, will arguably represent an historic and seismic change. Developers/funders/employers will be considering practical alternatives to retention.

The Bill introduces the new measures to deal with retentions through proposed amendments to the Construction Act i.e. new sections 113A to 113F. These amendments:

1. Introduce a wide definition for retentions (Section 113A (1))
2. Introduce a two-year transition period from the date section 113B comes into force before a full ban. During this period retention clauses will be permitted in contracts.
3. Any retention clauses included in

construction contracts after the end of the transition period would be void (s113C).

4. Once the ban is in force (i.e. after transition period), variations to pre-existing retention clauses would be void unless the provision makes the retention clause more favourable for the payee (s113D).
5. At the end of a three-year period ("the last retention day"), such retention clauses will be ineffective and s113B provides for the repayment of the "transitional retained sum".
6. After the transition period, if there is a breach of these provisions and deduction of an unauthorised sum (a so called "retention debt"), there is an implied term imposing a penalty of the higher of £40 or 50% of the retention debt (in addition to any interest payable and compensation for late payment) (s113E).

Why this is important?

While the wheels are in motion, there is no set timeframe for the Commercial Payments Act coming into force. We understand there will be a consultation process on the Bill, which is likely to focus on the process rather than the underlying principles.

However, if it comes into force later this year, retentions in new contracts could be banned at some point in 2028, with any transitional retained sums repaid in 2029.

The legislation cannot be contracted out of. On this basis, parties need to begin considering how to address these issues within their projects. More broadly, the industry will need to consider existing contracts, including standard forms, and assess how the reforms can be implemented in practice. →

Experts and industry leaders respond to the new bill

We spoke to Iain McIlwee, and **Steve Bratt**, Group Chief Executive Officer at the Electrical Contractors' Association and lead for the Business Models and Fair Practices workstream for the Construction Leadership Council, all of whom highlighted the importance of tackling a culture of late payment that has constrained growth, damaged relationships, and placed unnecessary pressure on businesses throughout the supply chain.

This is what they had to say.



Steve Bratt, Group Chief Executive Officer at the Electrical Contractors' Association and lead for the Business Models and Fair Practices workstream for the Construction Leadership Council

Steve explained that the direction of travel for payment and retentions legislation in UK construction is clear: a decisive shift towards fairness, transparency and protection of the supply chain. Recent proposals — including stricter payment terms and the planned ban on retentions — mark the most significant reform in a generation.

Steve said: "But this is about more than payment. It is about resetting how the industry operates. Construction is fundamentally driven by cash, and for too long many businesses — particularly across the supply chain — have been operating on thin margins, often effectively financing projects through withheld or delayed payments. When cashflow is constrained, investment in skills, quality and innovation is the first casualty.

"That approach is no longer sustainable. The emerging legislative framework is pushing the industry towards earlier engagement, stronger collaboration and a more mature allocation of risk — one where

it is actively managed, not dumped on the tiers below. Fair and predictable payment is the foundation that makes this possible.

"This aligns directly with the intent of the Building Safety Act, which places accountability and competence at the centre of project delivery. Competence cannot be achieved in a system that erodes margins, destabilises businesses and discourages investment in the people, processes and assurance needed to deliver safe buildings.

"As a result, we must rethink procurement. Selecting partners on the basis of value, capability, financial viability and long-term performance — rather than lowest cost — will be essential. Early supply chain engagement will enable better design, clearer risk management and improved outcomes."

The proposed changes to retentions, in particular, will not be universally welcomed. For some, they represent a significant shift away from established practices and familiar risk controls, noted Steve.

He said: "We know the current ways don't work, and the direction of travel is clear and should be welcomed, as it is vital that the industry responds constructively. There will rightly be a strong focus on maintaining and improving quality as these changes are implemented, and the transition period provides an opportunity to embed this — refining standards, strengthening assurance and ensuring the right behaviours are in place."

Steve concluded by saying: "Industry leadership will be critical, with organisations such as the Construction Leadership Council supporting a positive and collaborative transition.

"Ultimately, legislation alone will not deliver this change. The industry must embrace it—working together to implement reform in a practical and positive way. By doing so, we can create stronger, more sustainable businesses and a more resilient supply chain, delivering better, safer outcomes for all."

Iain said: "This is a historic and very good day for all in construction who have suffered from Late Payment and Retentions Abuse. It isn't the end, we have to make sure the Bill makes it through Parliament, but my strong hope and belief it is the beginning of the end and an



Iain McIlwee, FIS, Chief Executive

opportunity for the sector to grasp and use to find a better way to do business and remove the frictions associated with the dash for cash and behaviours that have undermined relationships and constrained opportunity to evolve. I'd like to thank colleagues from within the Department and across the sector who have tirelessly championed better and brought us to this moment."

To read the governments press release in full visit: www.gov.uk/government/news/largest-crackdown-on-late-payments-in-over-25-years-as-landmark-bill-enters-parliament

As an interim measure, FIS has led a coalition of specialist construction trade bodies in writing to Housing Minister **Steve Reed** OBE and the National Housing Bank, calling for urgent action to address growing liquidity pressures in the housing supply chain.

The letter notes that well over a £1 billion is currently outstanding from the seven major house builders currently reporting value of late payment - a situation that is untenable. Supported by organisations representing roofing, electrical works, carpentry, flooring and plumbing the letter sets out proposals that to link publicly backed development finance to mechanisms that improve liquidity through the supply chain, including the use of digital payment systems that ringfence funds and improve payment certainty.

Source

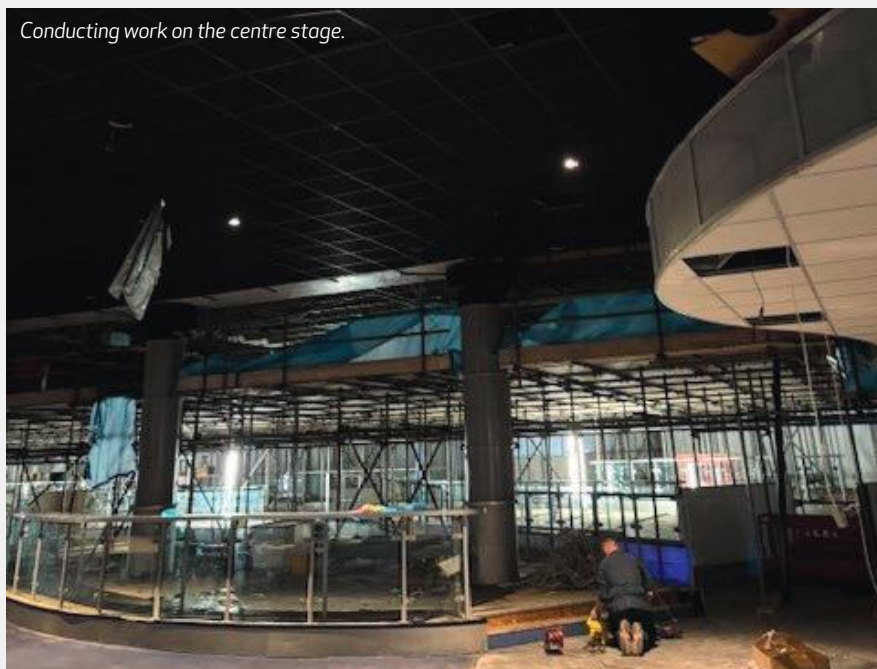
1. <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/4128>

"Ultimately, legislation alone will not deliver this change. The industry must embrace it—working together to implement reform in a practical and positive way."

THREE FIS MEMBERS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT BUTLINS MINEHEAD

Three FIS members collaborate on a seamless ceiling installation at the Butlins Centre Stage building in Minehead.

Conducting work on the centre stage.



Cipriani Profilati, SIG Insulation & Dry Lining, and C&I South-West (C&I), all FIS members, recently collaborated on the refurbishment of the Centre Stage building at Butlins Minehead, one of the South-West's leading holiday resorts.

The project involved a complete refurbishment of the venue to enhance the customer experience and create a vibrant, contemporary entertainment space designed specifically for Butlins' family audience.

Local subcontractor C&I was appointed as the key interiors contractor for the fit-out. The project was led from start to finish by Senior Surveyor **Phil Latta**, who selected distribution partner SIG Insulation & Dry Lining to support the delivery of the interior elements as part of the extended supply chain.

The refurbishment called for a new ceiling and SIG Insulation & Dry Lining, Sitefix Ceiling Grid, manufactured by Cipriani Profilati, was selected as the preferred solution for the installation. The black ceiling was chosen to replace the existing feature and was further enhanced to create a more modern look through the addition of feature bulkheads.

At 5,000m², this represented a substantial installation for C&I. Ease of

installation and the fully demountable design of the grid were therefore key factors in selecting the Sitefix ceiling grid for this important project.

The integrity of the Sitefix ceiling grid is a key element, particularly in the event of a fire or a catastrophic incident at the venue.

The Sitefix ceiling grid is typically 20% quicker to install, with integral clips enabling faster fitting and helping to save time on the project. This efficiency was especially important, as the project had a strict deadline to meet ahead of the start of the Easter and summer season.

CIPRIANI PROFILATI



Fully compatible with any 600x600 ceiling tile, the Sitefix ceiling grid was installed to house a mineral fibre ceiling tile. With the majority of the ceiling tiles specified in black, the 24mm black Sitefix ceiling grid in black provided the ideal solution, creating a seamless finish that was designed to go unnoticed.

Speaking about the Sitefix ceiling grid used on the project, **Marcus Coates**, UK Director for Cipriani Profilati, said: "In addition to the grid being fully compatible with standard-sized ceiling tiles, its strength was also a key factor in choosing Sitefix ceiling grid for this installation. The Sitefix ceiling grid is manufactured using internationally patented technology, delivering a unique product in the UK ceiling grid market."

Marcus concluded by saying: "The finished ceiling will provide a complete solution for years to come and is in keeping with the contemporary entertainment space required by Butlins and its customer base."

For more information on SIG Insulation & Dry Lining's Sitefix ceiling grid, visit: <https://sigdistribution.co.uk/> or contact any of the nationwide branches to discuss how we can work with you on your next project.

www.ciprianiprofilati.it/
<https://cisouthwest.co.uk/>
<https://sigdistribution.co.uk/>

(L-R) Marcus Coates and Phil Latta at the site.



DELOITTE CRANE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS CHANGING OFFICE DEMAND

The latest London Office Crane Survey from Deloitte reveals a decline in new office construction starts and a drop in new builds, resulting from viability challenges and occupiers demanding the best-in-class space.



This survey points to a potential supply gap from 2027 to 2030, as fewer new schemes have started or completed, as developers are tending to bring forward only the most robust opportunities.

However, developers are confident about the resilience of demand among occupiers for Grade-A office accommodation. Most developers anticipate that their office pipeline will either 'increase' (58%) or 'remain stable' (34%) over the next 12 months. 75% of developers also reported feeling more positive about leasing demand than they did 12 months ago. The report also noted that prime rents hit £187 per sq. ft. in the West End, where vacancy sits at 1%.

Deloitte's London Office Crane Survey measures office development activity across Central London and covers only new-build construction and significant or comprehensive refurbishment schemes of 10,000 sq. ft. and above. The survey covers the City, West End, Docklands, King's Cross, Midtown, Paddington and Southbank.

Survey construction metrics exclude cleared sites with no construction activity, demolition-only or strip-out-only sites, and schemes where construction has halted prior to completion. In the context of the survey, new builds are schemes that create a new structural frame (typically on cleared sites or following demolition of the previous structure). Refurbishments are significant or comprehensive works to an existing building that retain the existing structural frame.

The 2026 Deloitte London Office Crane Survey: Headwinds for all, tailwinds for some, collected data between 1 January and 31 December 2025 and covers numerous topics including market realities, geopolitics and macroeconomics; future of the office, impact of AI; setting the stage, planning and investment; Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), as a baseline

expectation; developer expectations, pipeline and leasing; and what the cranes say, including annual new construction start volume, Central London office development and leasing by sector.

Key takeaways from the survey

The survey noted that new start volumes in 2025 dropped to approximately c.4.8m sq.ft. across 57 schemes. This was down from 7.5m sq. ft. in 2024 and 8.7m sq. ft. in 2023. It is also below the five-year average of 6.5m sq. ft.

New build projects more than halved year-on-year, accounting for 1.6m sq. ft., down from the 3.6m sq. ft. recorded in 2024. The strategic pivot to refurbishment projects continued, with 3.1m sq. ft. commencing. This represented two-thirds (66%) of new starts, though this was down from 3.8m sq. ft. in the previous year. Refurbishments have now outstripped new development throughout the post-Covid period.

In 2025, 7.1m sq. ft. of office space was delivered to market, a rise of 8% from 2024. This also marks the third highest volume recorded in the Crane Survey's 30-year history, surpassed only by 2003 and 2023.

Future outlook

Future projects

These must be adaptable and designed to appropriate specifications, integrating robust connectivity and high-performance building systems that are AI-enabled and digitally resilient, while also meeting baseline sustainability requirements to keep pace with both evolving investor and occupier demands and rapid technological change. Further, a broader market trend emerges where businesses increasingly prioritise the surrounding micro-environment and social value, looking beyond the office's four walls.

These external factors are pivotal to ecosystem functionality, and this occupier sentiment reflects a structural market shift.

Refurbishment

The shift towards refurbishment is expected to continue, with such projects forecast to account for 65% of all new activity by 2030. This direction is likely to be reinforced by the new London Plan, due in 2027, that is expected to place greater emphasis on refurbishment. Momentum is also being driven by the need to address secondary stock at risk of obsolescence as certain ESG

Deloitte.



2026 Deloitte London Office Crane Survey

2025 in Review

Headwinds for all, tailwinds for some



standards become a baseline requirement for investors and occupiers. The case for refurbishment is strengthening, supported by lower materials and labour costs, lower embodied carbon, quicker planning approvals through the 'Retrofit First' policy and, ultimately, shorter building programmes.

Workplace expectations

Since the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, a series of shocks has shifted workplace expectations in a short period of time. Occupiers have reportedly reassessed headcount, in-office attendance and space per employee, making long-term requirements harder to forecast. Rising AI adoption is also reshaping workforce needs and accelerating the redesign of offices into AI-enabled workplaces. But, with demand in Central London increasingly concentrated on premium, well-located stock optimised for carbon efficiency, occupiers probably need to plan 3-10 years ahead of lease events—depending on size to secure space that best fits their requirements. The scarcity of prime space, particularly for large requirements (500,000 sq. ft. +), means that occupiers will need to consider a wider range of options such as: exploring fringe locations, or opting for lease renewals or extensions—to manage costs or considering the higher end secondary stock. Occupiers with less significant space requirements are increasingly considering flexible office space as it offers crucial agility to expand or contract, and greater lease term flexibility than traditional commitments.

Summary

London's office market remains structurally attractive. Demand has not disappeared. It has concentrated, with occupiers prioritising the best space, investors continuing to favour resilient assets and developers seeing key opportunities in prime locations. London's role as a global business hub continues to support that demand.

But the market is becoming materially harder to serve. Construction costs, planning delays, selective capital and geopolitical uncertainty are all putting pressure on development viability. At the same time, ESG has become a baseline expectation, whilst AI is starting to raise the bar again by increasing the demand for secure, connected and digitally resilient buildings. The gap is widening between assets that are future-fit and those at risk of obsolescence.

The question, then, is not whether demand for London offices remains but which assets will be best placed to capture it. How should developers, investors and occupiers respond when quality is being rewarded more strongly than ever, but is also becoming more expensive, more complex and more difficult to deliver?

The answer from this report is clear: London's office market is becoming a market of selective winners. Future value will concentrate in assets that are prime, sustainable, digitally resilient and capable of meeting more demanding occupier needs. As viability pressures constrain delivery, those businesses able to plan early, invest selectively and execute with discipline will be best placed to capture demand.

To read the report in full visit:
<https://tinyurl.com/39rzkfsm>

Speaking about the results of the survey **Caroline Waldock**, partner, real estate sector lead for Deloitte, said: "London's office market remains attractive, and the capital continues to attract global investment, talent and businesses. Occupier requirements and demand for best-in-class space is strong and is underpinning record prime rents.

"Larger tenants are facing scarcity, with competition for high-quality assets that are suited to companies' changing sustainability and technology requirements. However, while developers are confident in their pipeline, there are real delivery constraints, which brings with it a potential future supply gap."

Her colleague **Philip Parnell**, partner and head of real estate valuation at Deloitte, added: "Developers are once again facing rising construction costs and financing uncertainty alongside planning complexities associated with delivering projects in the capital. The continued shift to refurbishments goes beyond sustainability requirements and represents challenges around scheme viability, delivery risk and addressing occupiers' evolving needs around quality and flexibility."

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FIS Scottish Awards Lunch

voco Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow

18 September



The FIS Scottish Awards Lunch recognises and celebrates the outstanding projects completed by FIS members in Scotland.

FIS Conference, AGM and Innovation Awards

Whittlebury Park, Northamptonshire

22 October

FIS Golf Competition

Whittlebury Park, Northamptonshire

23 October

FIS Training Awards Lunch

Plasterers Hall, One London Wall, London

24 November

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

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Excellence on display as FIS crowns winners of 2026 Contractors Awards

The winners were revealed at the FIS Contractors Awards during a gala lunch held at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in the heart of London.

The ceremony hosted by **Reverend Richard Coles** – former pop star, vicar, broadcaster, and best-selling author, celebrated outstanding craftsmanship, exceptional collaboration, and exemplary adherence to best practice across the finishes and interiors community. Showcasing a diverse range of impressive projects, the event recognised the achievements of FIS members across eight award categories.



The Project of the Year was the amazing Haymarket Square by Roskel Contracts

Winners

Interior Fit-Out sponsored by SIG

- Large contracts: Bespoke Construction Services – Project Queen Fit Out
- Small contracts: Astra Office Interiors – Linde Demo Area

Partitioning sponsored by Protektor

- Large contracts: Indeglas – Haymarket Buildings 4 & 5
- Small contracts: ML Interiors – Private Investment Company

Partitioning – Operable Walls sponsored by Protektor

- Style Group – Excel Exhibition Centre – Phase 3

Plastering Fibrous and GRG sponsored by Go Interiors

- George Jackson – The Chancery Rosewood

Plastering – Internal sponsored by Go Interiors

- V&D Interiors – Bilton Grange Preparatory School

Drylining Commercial sponsored by CCF

- Roskel Contracts – Haymarket Square

Drylining Residential sponsored by British Gypsum

- Linear Projects – Square Gardens – Block D

Ceilings sponsored by Zentia

- Large contracts: Measom Dryline – The Chancery Rosewood Hotel
- Small contracts: Drywall Contracts – East Midlands Airport

Steel Framed Systems sponsored by Hadley Group

- Veitchi Interiors – New Tain Royal Academy

Acoustic Excellence – sponsored by Rockfon

- Vertex Acoustics – Café 24 – Goodwood Art Foundation

Most Sustainable Project sponsored by Alpha Drywall Systems

- Drummond Street by Simplicity Specialist Finishes

Project of the Year sponsored by Nevill Long

- Haymarket Square by Roskel Contracts

Congratulations to all the winners. To read more about each award-winning project, including photographs, project write-ups, and judges' comments, visit:

<https://www.thefis.org/award-winners-2026>

Style Group creates flexible acoustic workspace for Overbury's Manchester office

Style Group delivered a bespoke acoustic and partitioning package for fellow FIS member Overbury's new Manchester office, located on the 13th floor of Chancery Place. Working closely with architect SpacelInvader, the team created a flexible, high-performance workspace designed to support collaboration, focus and adaptability.

Creating a distinctive visual impact, Overbury's nautilus shell-inspired acoustic ceiling feature combines with custom teardrop-shaped acoustic baffles to provide effective sound control. In addition, a varied selection of Autex

acoustic wall panels — including printed, grooved and Groove Duet panels — delivers both acoustic performance and design creativity.

Existing Autex finishes within the room were also updated, further enhancing both the acoustic performance and overall aesthetic.

The success of the project was driven by close collaboration and careful delivery. The result is a workplace that performs as well as it looks — balancing acoustics, flexibility and design to support focus, collaboration and a high-quality user experience.

To read the story in full visit: <https://tinyurl.com/5ambrb5s>

Bespoke package at Chancery Place Pc. SG photography Ltd.



FIS launches drylining design engineer competency framework to elevate industry standards

The Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS) has launched the new Drylining Design Engineer Competency Framework, a significant step forward in defining professional standards, improving quality, and supporting career development across the interiors sector.

Developed in collaboration with industry experts, contractors, manufacturers, and training providers, the framework establishes a clear benchmark for the knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours (SKEB) required of drylining design engineers.

As construction projects grow increasingly complex, the need for qualified and competent design professionals has never been greater. This new framework aligns with broader industry initiatives around competency, including post-Grenfell regulatory reforms, and reinforces the



Drylining design engineer competency framework

importance of robust design processes in ensuring building safety.

The framework outlines core competencies across several key areas, including:

- Technical design knowledge and system understanding
- Regulatory compliance and building safety
- Risk management and problem-solving

- Communication and collaboration across project teams

The development of this competency framework reflects FIS's ongoing commitment to raising standards and driving continuous improvement across the sector. It adds to a growing suite of installer competency frameworks that are already available from FIS, including ceilings, drylining, fibrous plastering, moveable walls, solid plastering, raised access flooring and steel framed systems).

The Competency Framework is available on the FIS website at www.thefis.org/membership-hub/publications/competency-frameworks/drylining-design-engineer-competency/

To read the article in full visit: <https://tinyurl.com/mrxjvke7>

ROCKWOOL's full UK and Ireland range completes CCPI marketing integrity assessment

ROCKWOOL has announced that its entire product range has passed Code for Construction Product Information (CCPI) assessment, making it the broadest set of construction products by a single manufacturer to be assessed to-date.

The successful assessments cover ROCKWOOL's complete range of non-combustible stone wool insulation products, including roofing, façade and fire protection solutions, as well as the company's in-house firestopping range,

known as FirePro.

Introduced as a direct response to Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations, the code's methodology has been designed to provide a holistic assessment of product information and marketing to provide reassurance throughout the construction supply chain, and ultimately to building residents and occupants.

Undertaking a CCPI assessment includes in-depth evaluation of a

company's culture, processes and product information by an independent third-party verifier, and confirmation of each product's assessment sits alongside clearly accessible product safety and performance data on ROCKWOOL's website.

Moving forward, any new ROCKWOOL product sets will be CCPI assessed as they are introduced to the market.

To read the story in full visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/5dsrtmkm>



French apprenticeship model could inspire changes in skills training in England

Beena Nana, FIS Head of Skills and Training and **Davinder Jhamat**, FIS Chief Operating Officer, travelled to Strasbourg to visit the renowned Les Compagnons du Devoir et du Tour de France training centre, exploring whether aspects of the French apprenticeship model could help address growing skills shortages within the construction industry.

The visit offered an insight into a long-established training system centred on craftsmanship, mobility, and mentorship, while prompting discussion around how elements of the approach could strengthen training and professional identity across the finishes and interiors sector.

Understanding the Compagnons model

Les Compagnons du Devoir et du Tour de France¹ is a French organisation that trains young people through an immersive apprenticeship model combining classroom learning, paid work placements, travel and communal living. Based in cities across France, including Strasbourg, the organisation is best known for its "Tour de France" programme, where apprentices travel between regions to gain experience with different employers, techniques and working environments.

Unlike the English apprenticeship system, which is largely employer led and locally focused, the French model places strong emphasis on craftsmanship, mentorship, and personal development. Apprentices often spend between three and six years training while living alongside fellow trainees, helping to build a strong sense of community and professional identity.

Lessons England could learn

The Compagnons model provides several ideas that could potentially strengthen vocational education across England.

One approach could be to expand rotational apprenticeships further, giving trainees more structured opportunities to spend time with a wider range of employers throughout their training, rather than remaining primarily with a single company.

Another option could be the development of residential training centres, where apprentices participate in intensive short-term programmes focused on technical skills, teamwork and professional development.

The French emphasis on long term mentorship could also benefit the England system.

Despite these advantages, and while the Compagnons model offers valuable inspiration for future apprenticeship reform, fully replicating the French system in England would be challenging.

To read the story in full visit:

<https://specfinish.co.uk/french-apprenticeship-model-could-inspire-changes-in-skills-training-in-england/>

Source

1. <https://compagnons-du-devoir.com/>



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