Gateways, Competence & Collaboration – from principle to practice.

Key insights & lessons from the BSA Breakfast Forum, November 2026.



SDS

THE HEALTHCARE DOOR SPECIALIST

Executive summary.

The BSA Breakfast Forum, hosted by Specialist Door Solutions (SDS), brought together professionals from across the healthcare construction and building safety sector to explore the practical implications of the Building Safety Act, how its requirements are evolving, and what this means for those involved in the design, construction, refurbishment, compliance and operation of buildings.

The overarching message was clear: building safety is not simply about achieving approval or meeting a regulatory requirement. It is about demonstrating that buildings are safe, that decisions are supported by evidence, and that the information needed to maintain safety is available long after construction has finished.

In this document, we have summarised some of the key insights and discussion points from the session.



> "The Building Safety Act is guaranteeing a safer outcome."

Russell James, Strategic Partnership Director
Specialist Door Soluti

1. Building safety is increasingly about demonstrating compliance, not simply achieving it.

The Building Safety Act is changing how projects are planned, designed, delivered and handed over. It is no longer enough to assume a project is compliant because the work is complete or because previous standards were followed.

The discussion highlighted the growing need to demonstrate compliance through reliable evidence, clear decision-making, competent people, accurate documentation and robust processes.

Key points included:

- Gateway approvals require meaningful, project-specific information rather than generic or incomplete submissions.
- Compliance needs to be demonstrated throughout the project, not left until the end.
- Building safety requirements are influencing programme planning, procurement, funding, contracts and project delivery.
- Greater scrutiny is being placed on those responsible for decisions, design, construction, installation and building management.
- The importance of understanding how buildings will be operated and maintained long after construction has finished.

The focus is moving towards a more proactive, evidence-led approach to building safety, with accountability throughout the building lifecycle.

2. Legal responsibility and liability are becoming increasingly significant.

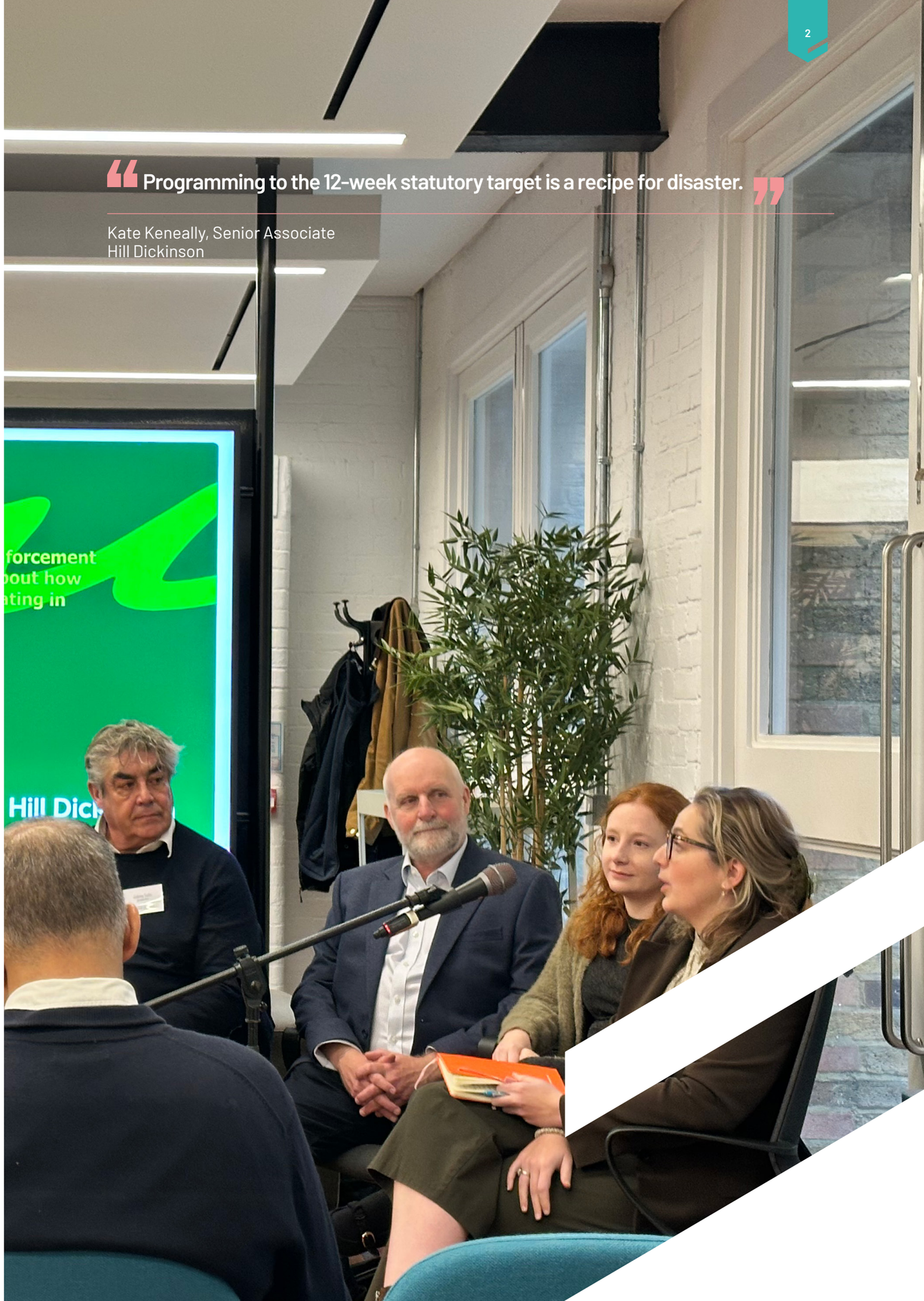
The legal update highlighted how recent Building Safety Act case law is continuing to develop, particularly around remediation, liability and the responsibilities of developers and associated companies.

Key observations:

- Liability can extend beyond the original developer. Associated companies may be pursued for remediation costs, meaning the use of special purpose vehicles (SPVs) or the insolvency of an original company does not necessarily end liability.
- Historic work can carry ongoing consequences. Remediation costs may be recoverable in circumstances where developers have undertaken works voluntarily to address safety issues.
- Due diligence is increasingly important. Organisations should investigate the wider corporate group, historical projects, contracts, responsibilities and potential exposure early.
- Gateway delays carry commercial implications. Delays resulting from design deficiencies, approvals and regulatory processes can affect programmes, costs and contractual liabilities.

The importance of planning for regulatory delays was particularly emphasised. Projects should avoid relying on optimistic approval times and should consider how delays, responsibilities and associated risks are addressed contractually.

Early investigation, enhanced due diligence, realistic programming and clearly defined contractual responsibilities are increasingly essential to managing building safety risk.





> **An organisation who's delivering principal designer roles needs to look at this and have all those competencies at their disposal.**

Anthony Taylor, Chair
Resolve Risk

3. Competence must be evidenced, managed and maintained.

Competence was discussed as more than qualifications, training certificates or professional membership. Organisations must understand what competence actually looks like for the work being undertaken and be able to demonstrate it.

Four key elements of individual competence were highlighted:

- Skills.
- Knowledge.
- Experience.
- Behaviours.

Integrity, accountability, understanding the limits of one's competence and knowing when to seek support or supervision were identified as important aspects of professional behaviour.

For organisations, competence management needs to go further than maintaining a spreadsheet of qualifications. It should involve understanding:

- The services and activities the organisation undertakes.
- The competencies required to deliver those activities safely.
- The people available to fulfil those roles.
- How competence is assessed, maintained and evidenced.
- How supervision and accountability are managed.

Principal Designer and Principal Contractor responsibilities were also highlighted as organisational functions requiring appropriate resources and competence across the team, rather than relying on one individual's expertise alone.

The speaker encouraged individuals to take responsibility for their own professional development and organisations to establish structured, evidence-based competence management systems.

4. Information is an asset – and its quality matters more than its quantity.

One of the strongest themes throughout the forum was the importance of accurate, verified and accessible building information.

The discussion highlighted that building information should not simply be collected for regulatory purposes. It is an asset that supports safe operation, maintenance, future refurbishment, financial decisions, insurance and ongoing building management.

Key points included:

- Information should be planned from the beginning of a project.
- Clients should establish what information they require before appointing contractors and suppliers.
- Information should be progressively checked, verified and validated as work develops.
- The final information must accurately reflect what has actually been installed and constructed.
- Information should be relevant, understandable, accessible and useful to the people managing the building.
- Handover information needs to be suitable for the systems and processes used by facilities and estates teams.

The forum challenged the practice of delivering large volumes of documentation that are difficult to navigate, incomplete, outdated or disconnected from the actual building.

The emphasis was on quality over quantity. A smaller, well-organised and verified set of information can be far more valuable than hundreds of drawings or documents that do not provide confidence in what has been built.

Building compliance information is essential, but operational teams also need relevant maintenance, repair, replacement and asset information.



> "We need the evidence. Value over volume."

Anthony Taylor, Chair
Resolve Risk



5. Gateway applications require early planning, coordination and realistic timelines.

The design process is changing significantly as a result of the Building Safety Act, particularly in relation to Gateway 2 applications and the need to demonstrate compliance before construction progresses.

The discussion highlighted the importance of bringing detailed design, coordination and decision-making forward.

Key insights:

- Design information needs to be developed to a greater level of detail before construction.
- Greater coordination is required between architects, consultants, MEP engineers, contractors and specialist subcontractors.
- Fire stopping, penetrations, interfaces and other critical details must be properly considered and coordinated.
- Compliance trackers should be introduced early and used as working tools throughout the project.
- Applications should clearly demonstrate compliance, rather than overwhelming reviewers with unnecessary information.
- Drawings need to be clear, concise, well organised and easy to navigate.

It was highlighted that the Building Safety Regulator does not necessarily require every construction detail in every drawing. The information submitted should be appropriate to demonstrate compliance with the relevant requirements.

This means distinguishing between information required for regulatory compliance, information required for cost planning and information required for construction and delivery.

6. Existing healthcare buildings present additional challenges.

The challenges associated with applying Building Safety Act requirements to existing buildings were particularly relevant to healthcare estates.

Unlike new-build projects, existing buildings often have incomplete, outdated or inconsistent records. In hospitals, this is compounded by the need to maintain clinical operations and the limited opportunity to undertake intrusive surveys or investigations before works begin.

Challenges discussed included:

- Incomplete or unreliable historical O&M information.
- Hidden services and building conditions that cannot be fully surveyed before construction.
- Limited access to areas within live healthcare environments.
- Existing fire strategies and building components that may require further verification.
- Discovering unexpected conditions once works begin.
- Demonstrating how works within one project boundary may affect the safety and compliance of the wider building.

The importance of being honest about known unknowns was emphasised.

Rather than assuming that all existing information is accurate, projects should identify areas of uncertainty, develop a clear strategy for investigating them and establish how compliance will be demonstrated as further information becomes available.

For example, an application may establish the principles and strategy for addressing existing services or fire stopping, with further surveys undertaken once access becomes available following approval.





7. Early contractor and supply-chain engagement improves certainty.

Paul's perspective highlighted the importance of collaboration throughout the project, particularly during the early design stages.

Traditionally, some elements of design and coordination may have continued into construction. The Building Safety Act is encouraging more decisions, detailing and coordination to be completed earlier.

This creates opportunities to:

- Bring specialist contractors and suppliers into the process earlier.
- Resolve technical issues before construction begins.
- Coordinate designs and interfaces across different disciplines.
- Improve cost certainty and budget control.
- Reduce late changes and disruption.
- Build realistic programmes around design development and Gateway approvals.

Although this requires more work upfront, the benefits can be significant. More informed decisions early in the process can reduce inefficiencies, delays and uncertainty during construction.

The forum also highlighted a more collaborative approach between clients, architects, contractors and manufacturers, with greater emphasis on working together to achieve the right outcome rather than simply focusing on individual contractual responsibilities.

8. Construction quality and installation evidence are just as important as design.

The discussion highlighted the importance of ensuring that what is installed on site matches the approved design and specification.

As building safety requirements become more rigorous, there is an increasing need for reliable evidence of construction quality and installation compliance.

Key areas included:

- Ensuring products are installed in accordance with their tested and approved details.
- Recording work as it progresses, rather than relying on retrospective evidence.
- Maintaining quality assurance checks throughout construction.
- Capturing photographs, records and evidence of completed works.
- Ensuring that installations can be verified without unnecessary intrusive investigations later.
- Making sure the correct information is available to support future audits, inspections and investigations.

The panel discussed instances where projects have required walls to be opened up years later to confirm that installations were completed correctly. Where evidence has not been captured at the time, proving compliance can become significantly more difficult, disruptive and costly.

This reinforces the importance of competent installers, appropriate supervision, robust quality assurance and effective record keeping.



> “Ultimately, it’s about record keeping, which has obviously always been the case. But I think there’s greater emphasis on it now.”

Paul Spurgeon, Health Lead
Kier



Looking ahead.

Although the Building Safety Act continues to present challenges for the industry, the forum highlighted a number of positive developments.

Organisations are learning from the application process, refining their approaches, improving product information and developing stronger relationships across the supply chain. Greater emphasis on early engagement, coordination and evidence is helping drive more informed decision-making and better project outcomes.

Ultimately, these changes are about more than compliance. They are about creating buildings that are safe, reliable, fit for purpose and capable of being properly managed throughout their lifecycle. For healthcare environments in particular, the importance of this cannot be overstated. The buildings we design, construct, maintain and refurbish directly affect patients, staff and the peopleesponsible for delivering care.

The Building Safety Act is challenging the industry to work differently – and the opportunity is to use that change to improve not only how buildings are delivered, but how they are managed and kept safe in the long term.

SDS, as a manufacturer and industry convenor, is committed to supporting the healthcare construction sector through this transition, providing trusted products, technical guidance, and collaborative forums that help stakeholders navigate this key regulatory environment with confidence.

If you'd like to watch a replay of the Forum - you can see the session in full **here**.

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