



## Collaboration and Compliance for Peace of Mind at Stepnell

Established in 1867, Stepnell are part of the very fabric of the UK construction industry.

Serving a broad spectrum of private and public sector clients, Stepnell ensure their clients realise their vision by providing a more holistic approach to project design, build, management and delivery with the resources and infrastructure to deliver larger, more challenging projects.

David Crombie is Stepnell's Group Chief Accountant. With an 18-year long tenure in executive finance roles at some of the UK's largest contractors, David knows the payment notice process extremely well. He and the team at Stepnell chose to roll out Payapps across their projects to help with the management and certification of applications for payment. We asked David to shed some light on Stepnell's processing of applications before and after the introduction of Payapps.

## Life Before Payapps

Before adopting a new process, Stepnell's method for managing applications for payment and payment notices was, as it still is in many construction firms, rather laborious. David explains, "Upon receiving the subcontractor's application, the quantity surveyor would make their assessment and then provide the payment notice to the contracts manager for approval. The approved application was then returned to our commercial team for final approval. Only when fully signed off could it be passed to our finance department to raise the payment within the ERP system.

"This sounds like a relatively neat workflow," says David, "Until you realise that it was largely paper-based, involving much manual effort to pass the paperwork between departments.

"Add to that the errors inherent in manual data entry, the need to chase teams to review and approve documents, and the risk of mislaid information, it became clear to us here at Stepnell that there was room for both accuracy and efficiency improvements – we wanted to make the status of each application more visible to all concerned."

Siloed information, missed deadlines and payment delays were inevitable given the number of manual steps involved. Stepnell, a forward-thinking contractor, have been quick to realise, however, that there must be a better way; a way that improves communication within their business across the entire process while also enhancing collaboration with their supply chain.



## Automated Workflow for Improved Efficiencies

Stepnell were keen to modernise their process and unite information within a centralised platform to provide a single version of the truth across their own departments and to their subcontractors. Having explored the online Payapps platform, they knew they had found a solution that would benefit all parties concerned.

David tells us, “Now, those involved in the application for payment process are immediately notified following approval at prior stage, and automation of payment notices ensure we no longer miss deadlines – it’s a big relief.”

Streamlining the workflow has significantly improved the speed and accuracy in the way applications for payment are processed at Stepnell, much to the delight of those involved, including David: “The visibility of our cash position on all of our projects and contracts has been a revelation. There have been substantial time savings because of the elimination of manual administration, allowing the team to become increasingly efficient on a day-to-day basis. Payapps has completely resolved the key challenges we faced trying to manually process applications for payment.”

David goes on to say, “The commercial and account teams can more easily collaborate. We can quickly and easily identify any bottlenecks that might slow the processing of applications, helping us to reduce the number of stalled payments and pay less notices. Ultimately, using Payapps to reduce blind spots across all departments reassures us that we are operating in accordance with the Construction Act and that we are proactively reducing risk of adjudication. At the same time we can use Payapps to verify insurance documents and CIS tax rates.”

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David Crombie | Group Chief Accountant, Stepnell

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### Why Stepnell Wouldn't Be Without Payapps

David seems thrilled to have introduced Payapps, quickly and easily improving the experience of managing applications for payment not only across Stepnell's teams but for their supply chain members too.

"We knew there were major improvements that could be made across the entire process and so we were overjoyed to discover a solution that effectively removes our worry about getting it right... and that means our subcontractors are also reassured that payments will be made as contractually agreed."

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"Payapps does the hard work by making certain we're on track at every stage, ensuring we're legislatively compliant and reducing financial risk by providing visibility of payment status across all projects. We couldn't do without it now."

David Crombie | Group Chief Accountant, Stepnell

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