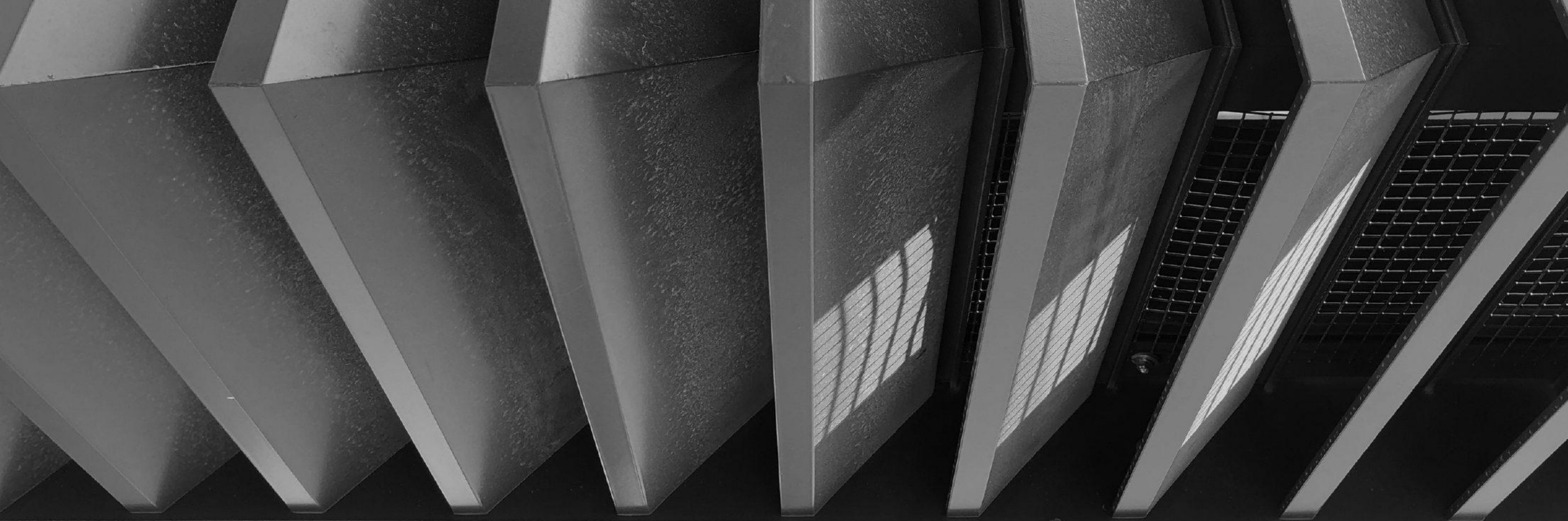


A CONTRACTOR'S GUIDE TO DE-RISKING FAÇADE PACKAGES

A contractor's guide to reducing
risk & improving façade delivery.





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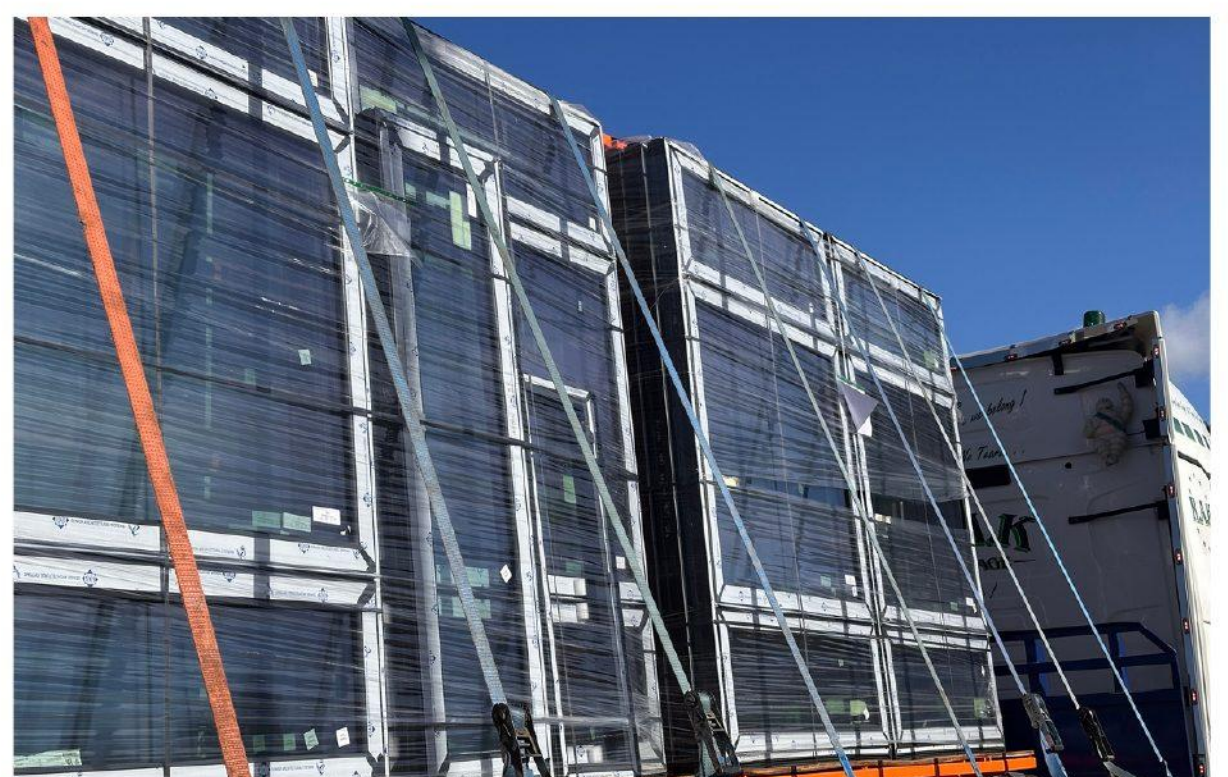
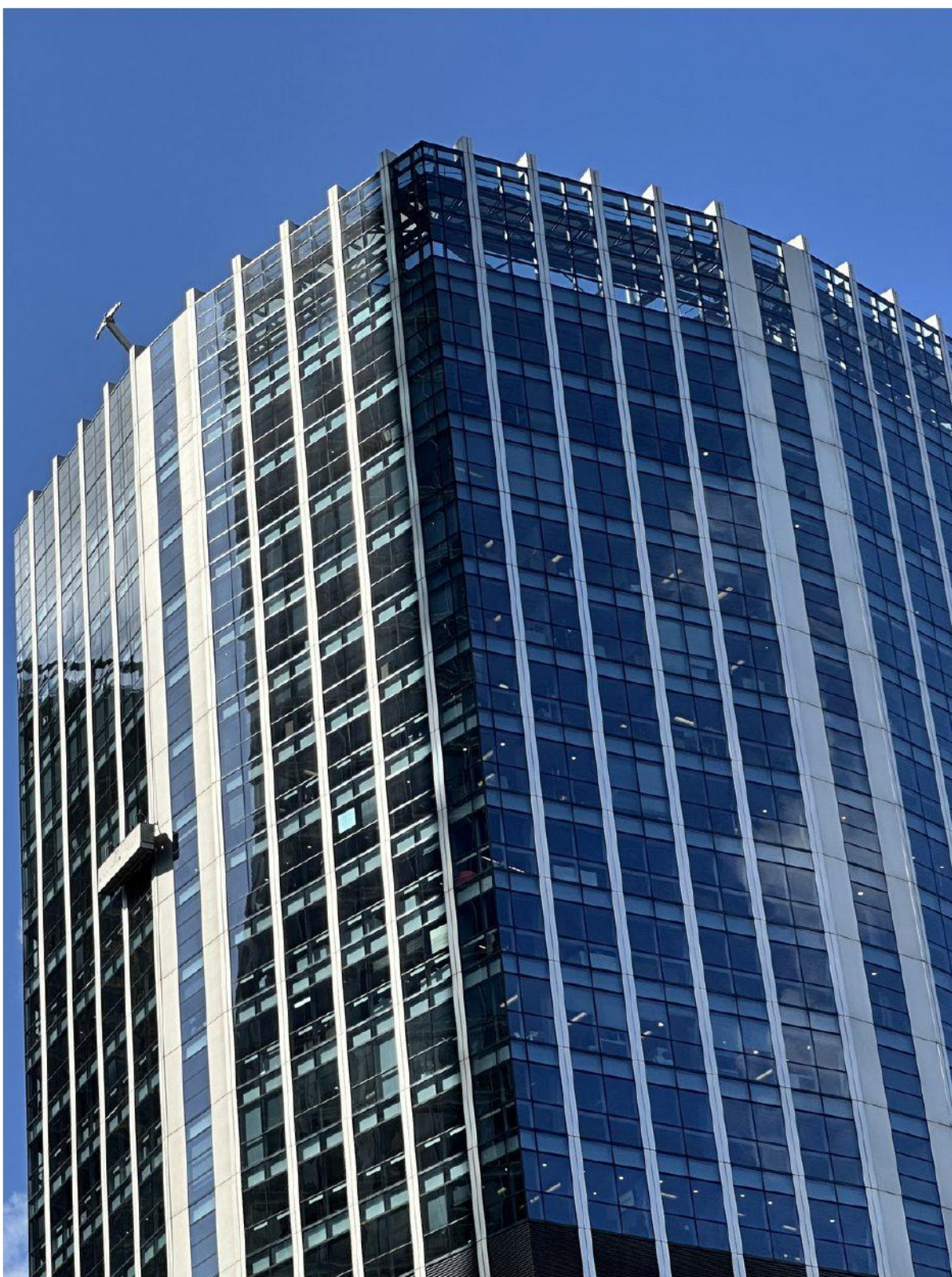
A CONTRACTOR'S GUIDE TO DE-RISKING FAÇADE PACKAGES

Façade packages are among the most commercially sensitive elements of a construction project. For main contractors delivering projects valued between £20m and £100m or more, the façade often represents a significant portion of both cost and risk.

While the building envelope is essential to the performance and appearance of a project, it is also one of the areas most prone to design ambiguity, programme pressure and compliance challenges. For quantity surveyors responsible for evaluating tenders and managing project costs, façade decisions can have a major influence on final project outcomes.

Getting these decisions wrong can lead to delays, disputes, variations and costly rework.

This guide explores risk management in construction projects, focusing on where façade risk arises and how contractors can structure procurement, design and delivery strategies to reduce exposure and improve project certainty.



WHY FAÇADE PACKAGES ARE HIGH-RISK (AND GETTING RISKIER)

Façades combine the aesthetic with the practical and are vitally important to every building. They protect a building from the elements and give it its architectural appearance, too. Consequently, façade systems sit at the intersection of multiple technical disciplines, including structural performance, thermal efficiency, fire safety, acoustics, weatherproofing and appearance. All those elements must be balanced within a single package, and that complexity alone introduces risk.

Façade packages do not typically fail because of materials alone; they fail where systems, responsibilities and interfaces are not fully coordinated.

However, recent regulatory changes and increased scrutiny across the construction industry following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 have made façade delivery even more challenging. Insurers, funders, regulators and end clients now demand significantly higher levels of compliance evidence and product traceability than in previous years.

At the same time, programme pressures remain intense. For quantity surveying (QS) teams responsible for cost management, façade packages can become difficult to compare accurately at the tender stage. On the surface, one contractor may appear significantly cheaper than another, but the reasons behind that difference are not always immediately obvious.

It is not uncommon to see façade tenders vary by significant margins for what appears to be the same scope, not because of efficiency, but due to differences in assumptions, exclusions or compliance allowances.

Frequently, the lowest tender price reflects incomplete scope allowances, optimistic assumptions or exclusions that only become visible later in the project lifecycle.

When this happens, the façade package can quickly shift from being a competitive procurement win to a significant variation risk, often with substantial cost and programme implications.



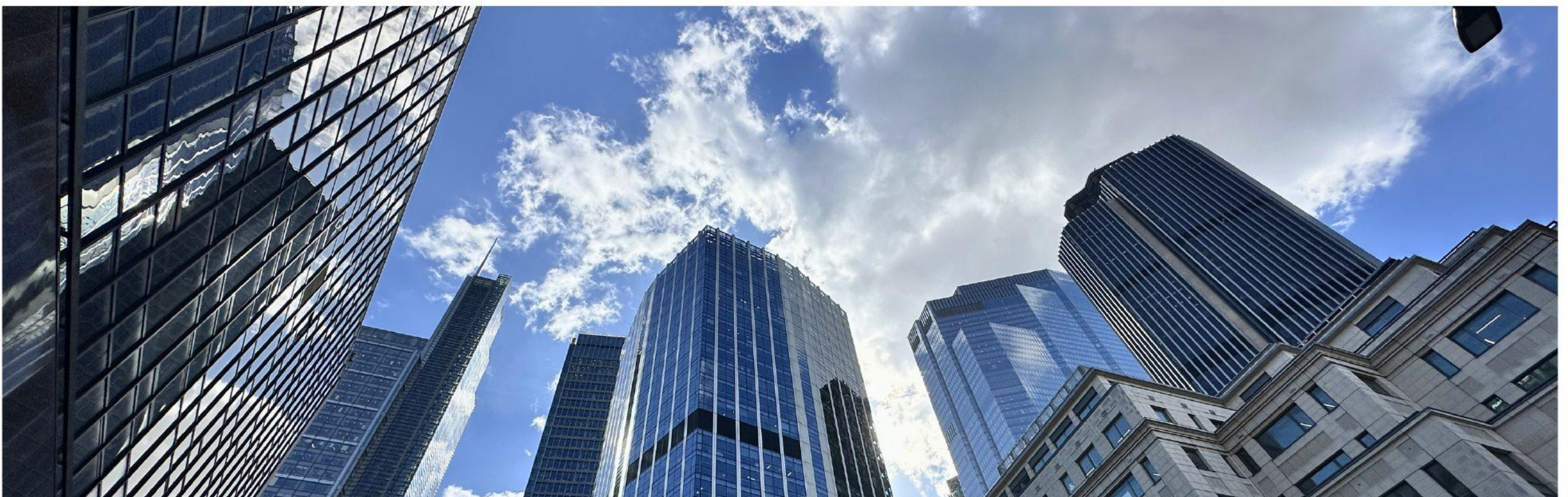
UNDERSTANDING WHERE FAÇADE RISK ACTUALLY COMES FROM

To effectively manage façade packages, it's important to understand where the real risks originate. In many cases, the challenges do not come from the façade itself but from gaps in procurement strategy, design clarity and supply chain coordination.

DESIGN RESPONSIBILITY UNDER DESIGN & BUILD

Under design and build procurement, façade design responsibility is often transferred to the façade contractor. While this approach can streamline delivery, it can also create ambiguity if the initial specification does not clearly define performance requirements, buildability constraints or interface responsibilities.

QS teams reviewing tenders may find that different subcontractors interpret the same specification in very different ways, making accurate cost comparison difficult.



SPECIFICATION GAPS

Many façade specifications rely heavily on performance criteria rather than detailed buildable solutions. For example, requirements for U-values, acoustic performance or fire resistance may be specified without a clear indication of how those outcomes should be achieved, and unfortunately, that leaves room for interpretation.

Some subcontractors may propose technically robust solutions with realistic allowances, while others may submit lower bids based on assumptions that later prove non-compliant or impractical. Whilst that can initially prove attractive from a budgetary perspective, it can leave you open to further costs down the line if remedial work is undertaken.



COMPLIANCE COMPLEXITY

Modern façades must satisfy strict regulatory requirements, which can include:

- Fire performance
- Thermal performance
- Structural integrity
- Acoustic insulation
- Weather resistance

Demonstrating compliance often requires testing evidence, certification and traceability documentation. If compliance issues arise late in the design process, they can trigger redesign, delays and significant commercial exposure, often resulting in additional cost and programme disruption.

SUPPLY CHAIN PRESSURES

Another common source of risk is supply chain capacity and procurement lead times. Specialist façade systems frequently involve complex manufacturing processes and long lead times.

If these factors are not considered early in the procurement process, they can impact programme certainty and delay completion. Installation sequencing and coordination with other trades can also introduce further delays if you don't have clearly defined responsibilities for all your contractors.

PACKAGE STRATEGY: STRUCTURING FAÇADE WORKS TO REDUCE RISK

One of the most important decisions in façade procurement is how the package itself is structured. In some projects, glazing and cladding are procured as separate subcontract packages. In others, they are combined into a single façade package delivered by one specialist contractor. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages, but this kind of fragmentation with two separate companies, cultures and different ways of working often increases risk.

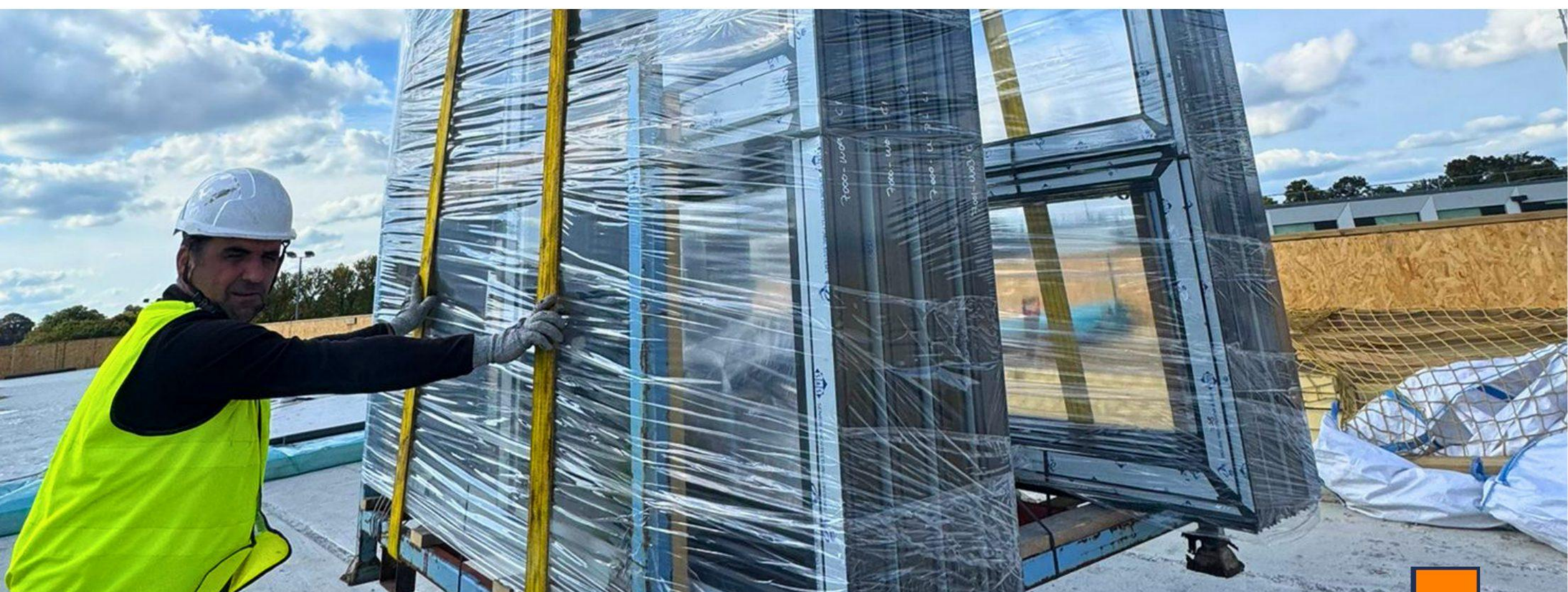
While split packages can offer flexibility in certain procurement routes, they typically introduce additional interface risk that must be actively managed.

THE PROBLEM WITH SPLIT PACKAGES

When glazing and cladding are delivered by separate contractors, the interfaces between systems can become a point of dispute. Questions arise, such as:

- Who is responsible for coordination?
- Who carries design liability for the interface?
- Who resolves issues if systems clash?

These interface risks can lead to programme delays and additional variation costs, not to mention additional project management pressures as you try to coordinate two different contractors.



THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATED PACKAGES

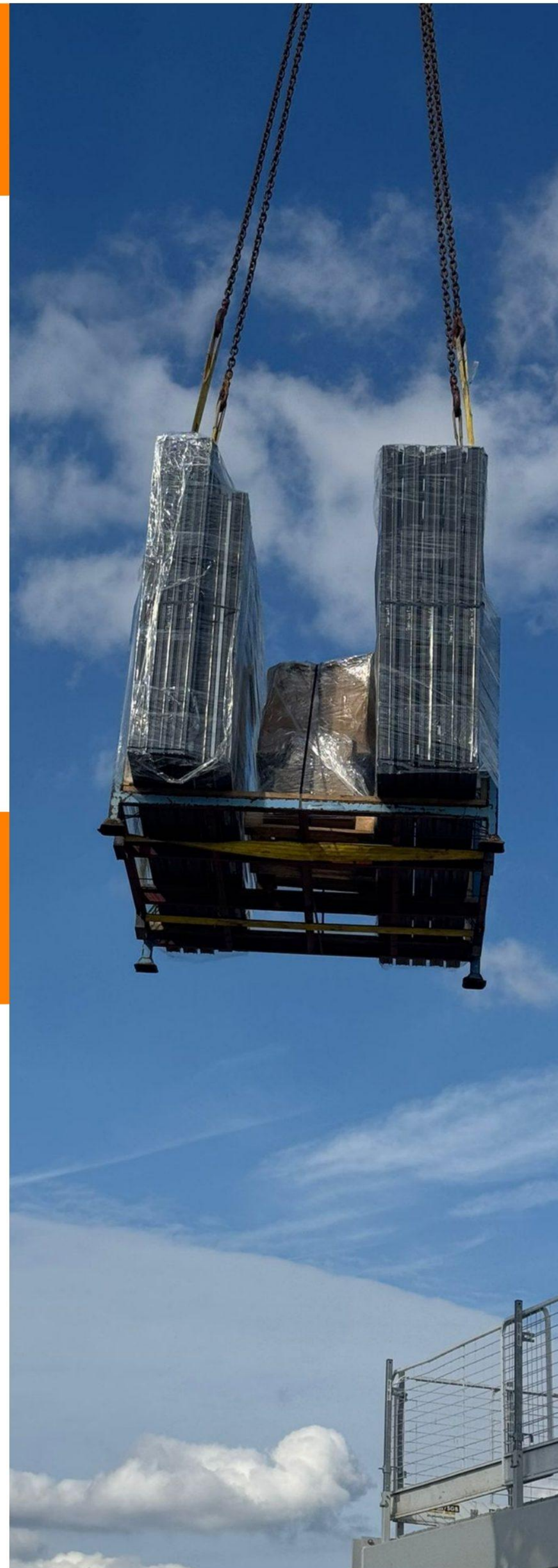
An integrated façade package, delivered by a single specialist façade subcontractor, can significantly reduce this ambiguity. By combining cladding and glazing responsibilities into one scope, accountability becomes clearer.

This allows you to manage design coordination, system compatibility and installation within a single delivery structure with one point of contact. You're not left acting as a go-between and trying to manage contractors who may not fully align with the specifications. This approach can simplify risk management and reduce the likelihood of disputes later in the project.

DESIGN, COMPLIANCE & THE IMPACT OF REGULATION

The regulatory environment for façade systems has evolved significantly in recent years, introducing more stringent protective measures and greater accountability following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, in which 72 people died. In that particular case, investigations found the refurbished aluminium composite cladding and insulation system contributed significantly to the rapid spread of the fire.

This tragedy ultimately led to the Building Safety Act 2022, which introduced stricter oversight of building safety and increased accountability across the construction supply chain. For contractors, this means compliance documentation and product traceability are more important than ever.



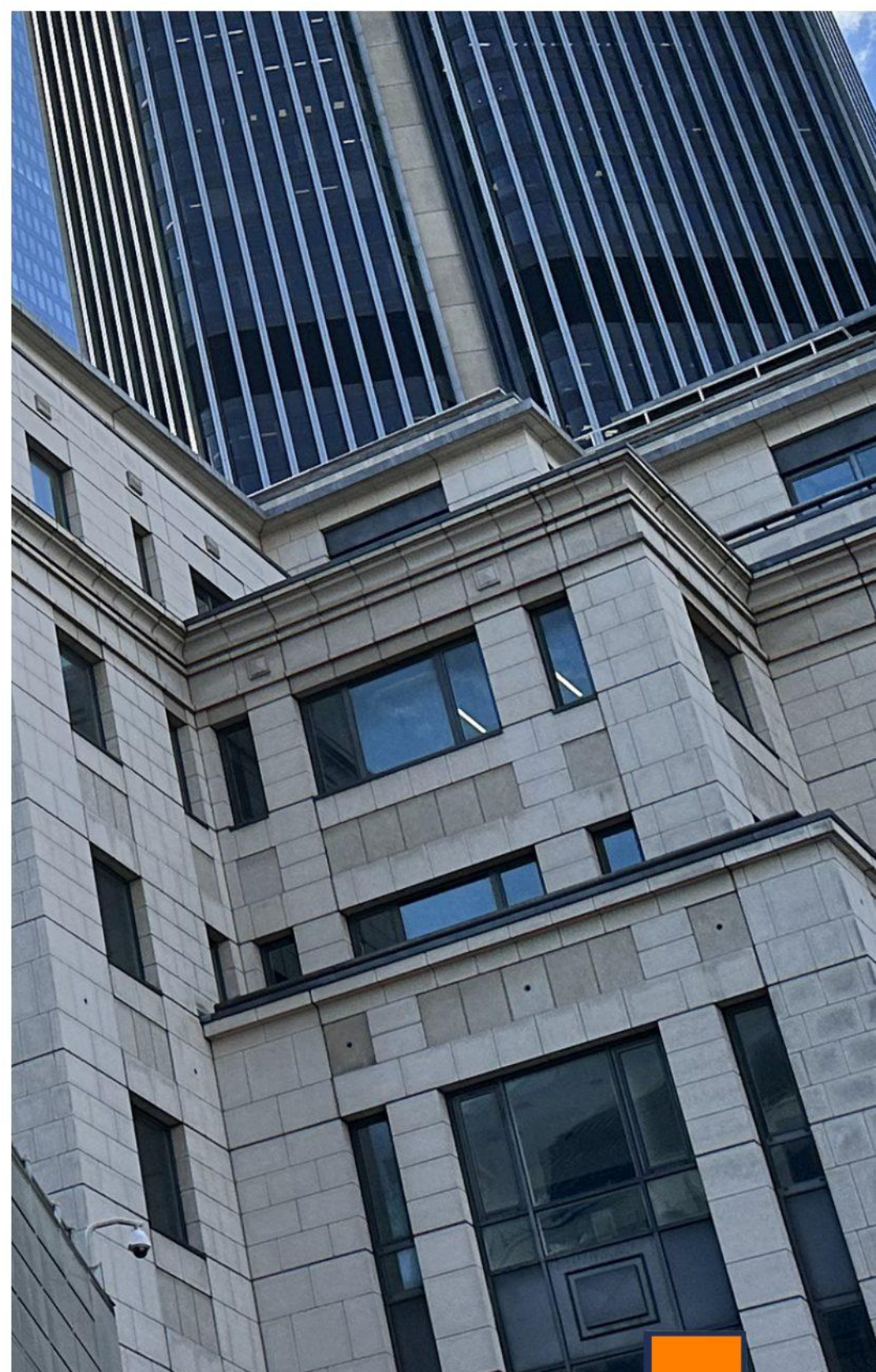
FIRE PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

In the wake of Grenfell, fire safety is now one of the most scrutinised aspects of façade design. Contractors must ensure that façade systems meet strict fire performance standards and are supported by appropriate testing evidence. Failing to demonstrate compliance can delay approvals and potentially require major redesign work.

THE GOLDEN THREAD OF INFORMATION

Modern building safety regulations emphasise the need for a clear, traceable record of design decisions, product specifications and compliance documentation throughout a project. This is often referred to as the Golden Thread.

For QS teams, this means subcontractors must be able to provide comprehensive documentation supporting the materials and systems used within the façade package. If you fail to record and collate this information, it can create significant commercial risk at later stages of the project.



REVIEWING & ASSESSING COMPLEX FAÇADE TENDERS



Façade tenders are rarely straightforward, so when you review bids, it's essential you look beyond headline pricing and understand the assumptions underpinning each proposal.

Key areas to review include:

- > **Design responsibility assumptions**
- > **System specifications**
- > **Compliance evidence**
- > **Installation sequencing**
- > **Programme allowances**
- > **Scope exclusions**

A lower price may reflect genuine efficiency, but it may also indicate incomplete scope allowances, and given the increased regulation, this is something you need to be mindful of. The cheapest façade tender is rarely the lowest final cost.

Assessing contractor capability is equally important. Their experience delivering similar façade systems, technical expertise and the ability to manage complex compliance requirements can be just as important as price when you evaluate risk.

REDUCING RISK THROUGH EARLY ENGAGEMENT

One of the most effective ways to reduce façade risk is through early engagement with your specialist contractors. When façade subcontractors are involved during early design stages, they can provide valuable input on buildability, system selection and cost certainty.

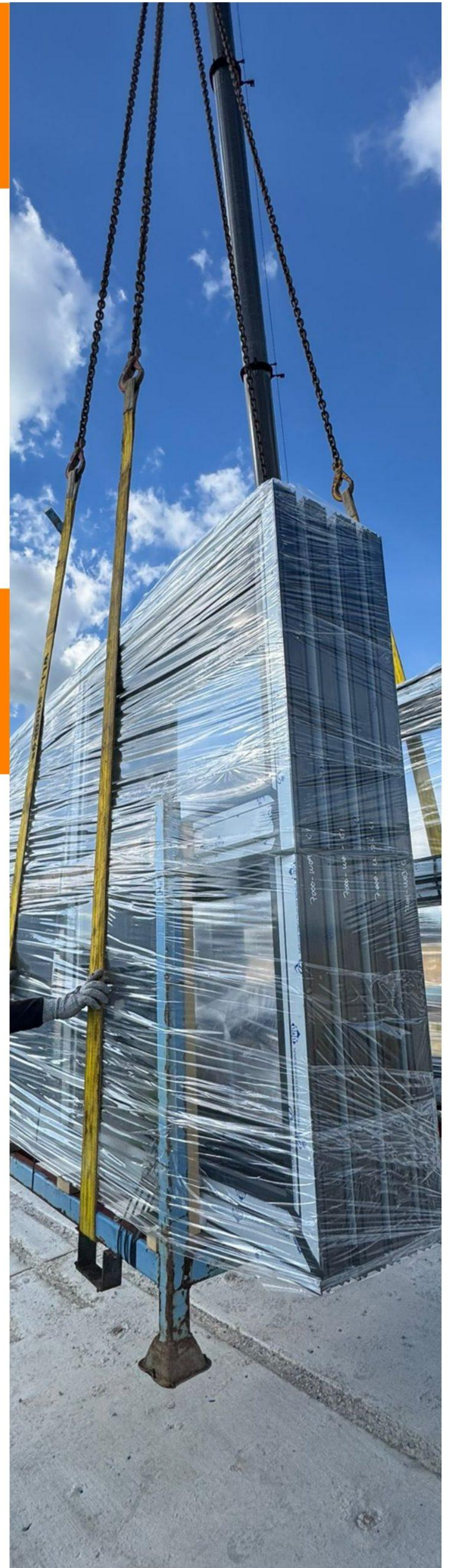
This collaborative approach can help identify potential issues before they become major problems and help you stay within budget, as well as meet regulatory requirements

BENEFITS OF EARLY CONTRACTOR INVOLVEMENT

Early engagement can help contractors:

- **Identify design conflicts earlier**
- **Improve cost accuracy during the tender stage**
- **Reduce redesign later in the project**
- **Improve programme certainty**
- **Simplify compliance documentation**

For QS teams managing complex projects, this proactive approach can significantly reduce the likelihood of costly variations later in the construction process.



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

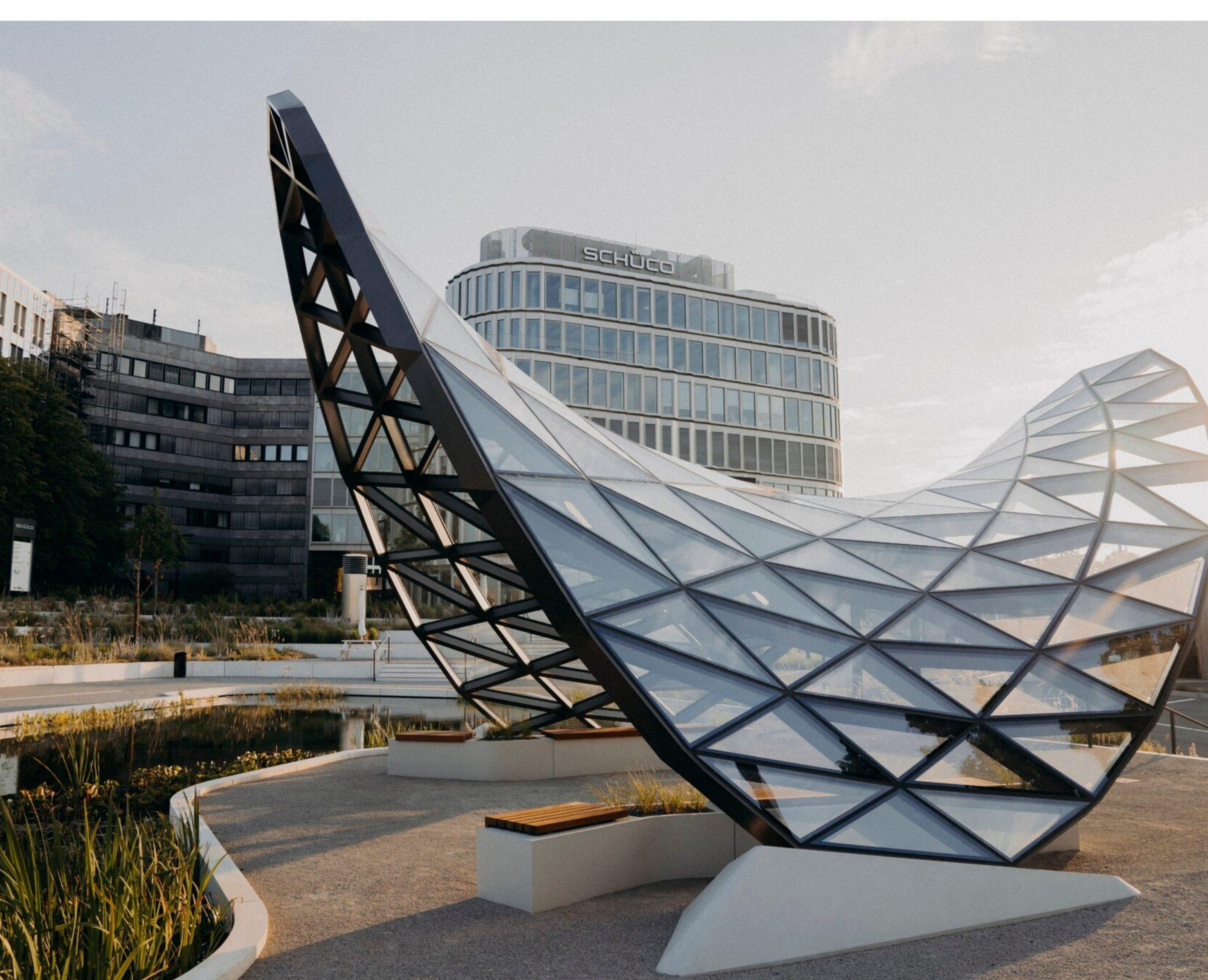
A PRACTICAL FAÇADE DE-RISKING CHECKLIST

Façade packages will always carry some level of risk. However, when you utilise careful procurement strategies and engage in early collaboration, it can help minimise your exposure. When you review façade tenders or prepare procurement strategies, consider the following checklist:

FAÇADE PACKAGE RISK CHECKLIST

- ✓ Is design responsibility clearly defined?
- ✓ Are system specifications buildable and compliant?
- ✓ Are fire and performance requirements fully evidenced?
- ✓ Are glazing and cladding interfaces clearly ordained?
- ✓ Are subcontractor assumptions and exclusions fully understood?
- ✓ Is the contractor experienced with similar façade systems?
- ✓ Have supply chain lead times been considered?
- ✓ Is there a clear compliance documentation strategy?
- ✓ Has early specialist engagement been considered?

Taking a structured approach to façade procurement helps you improve cost certainty and reduce the likelihood of disputes later in the project lifecycle.



DISCUSS YOUR UPCOMING PROJECT

Façade packages will always involve technical and commercial complexity. However, working with a specialist façade subcontractor who understands both the technical and commercial aspects of delivery can significantly reduce project risk.

If you're reviewing an upcoming façade package or preparing a tender submission, early discussion can often help identify potential risks before they become costly problems.

If you're reviewing an upcoming façade package or preparing a tender submission, [discuss your upcoming project with Advanced Glass](#) to clarify scope, reduce risk and support more predictable outcomes.