

Celebrating 20 years of excellence in permanent façade access solutions

1 year ago



Founded by Managing Director Kevin Walton, Integral Cradles marks its 20th anniversary this May.

Since 2004, Integral Cradles has become synonymous with trust and excellence, delivering advanced and complex façade access solutions for the UK's most iconic buildings.

Identifying an opportunity in the market

Kevin Walton's journey into the realm of building access began during his tenure as a project manager for tower projects in Canary Wharf, following experience working overseas on building projects in Hong Kong.

"I was a project manager working on tower projects for Canary Wharf, including managed access companies," Kevin explained. "I quickly recognised that there were improvements that could be made to the access systems which I was managing in the UK, the large manufacturing suppliers in Europe were high quality and I believed we needed to introduce this engineering quality to the UK market, so I set up Integral Cradles with a vision to achieve this."

Starting small, Kevin's dedication and hard work quickly led to significant project awards.

"In the early days, we faced numerous challenges, from operating as a team of just two people to proving ourselves in a competitive market," Kevin recalled.

"I remember printing out tenders on my home HP LaserJet during the night to get copies in that ended up being our first significant projects - 20 Palace Street for MACE and 70 Brompton Road for Laing O'Rourke." He said.

“I also vividly remember on one of our early projects having a guy turning up at my house with the machine on the back of a lorry instead of at the site, so there were certainly some teething problems! But with perseverance and a commitment to quality delivery, we established Integral Cradles as a trusted name in the industry.”

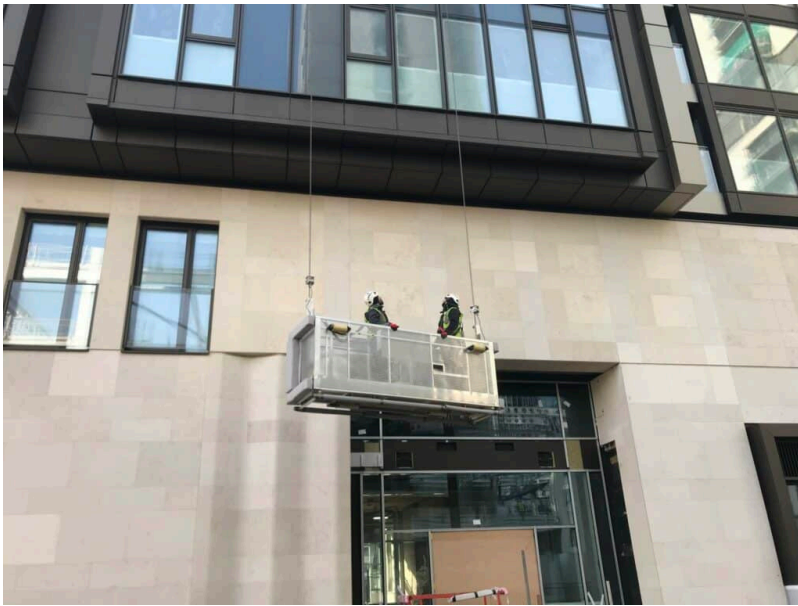


World-class building maintenance solutions

Over the past two decades, Integral Cradles has been involved in numerous landmark projects, spanning London’s iconic skyline. Buildings Integral Cradles has worked on include The Leadenhall Building, 30 St. Mary’s Axe, One Blackfriars Tower, and 52 Lime Street, famously known as The Scalpel.

The Scalpel, a commercial skyscraper in the City of London and the European headquarters of insurance company W.R. Berkley stands at an impressive 190 metres tall, with 35 levels of office space, over 500,000 square feet of commercial space and over 12,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, an iconic building towering over London’s skyline.

The project has been recognised in numerous industry awards, including Integral Cradles’ being shortlisted as a finalist in Project of the Year by a Specialist Contractor (sub-contract £2m-£5m) in the 2020 CN Specialist Awards and the Technology category of the IWFM Awards in 2022.



Collaboration and a whole lifecycle solution

Collaboration has been a key driver of Integral Cradles' success during its 20-year history. Kevin emphasises the importance of working closely with architects, contractors, and facilities management teams from the project's inception to its completion and beyond.

"It's about wrapping it all together, from concept to the end of life," he explained.

"We believe great things happen when all parts of the supply chain work together. Wherever possible, we get involved as early as possible, working with architects on new-build projects, so that a façade access solution becomes a seamless part of the building's operation."

Integral Cradles also collaborates with its manufacturing partner, GIND of Madrid, Spain to design and build bespoke access solutions. With rigorous testing and attention to detail, each system is installed and maintained to the highest standards.

GIND UK was subsequently formed in 2016 as a strategic maintenance and aftercare provider for the access solutions installed by Integral Cradles. Together the two organisations can deliver a complete design, manufacture, installation, service and maintenance solution.

"We employ a team that works with the architects, and access consultants and helps them develop a scheme, deliver it with the main contractor and look after it while they finish their buildings. We'll then work with the FM companies to maintain it and then eventually when they look to replace or update it in years to come, we'll return to deliver that. It's a truly whole lifecycle solution for building access." Kevin explained.



Navigating a changing landscape

As technology evolves, Kevin says the changes in the construction industry continue to develop.

“The main change is to do with governance and control. The levels of requirement from BIM, ISO and more recently the ‘model first’ approach are a given now rather than an option. This is a good thing for us as it helps us - having things like clash detection and model design deliverables as requirements on every job means we can work alongside our clients more collaboratively to achieve these.”

3D collaboration tools are also developments Kevin sees as positives:

“In Europe, the supply chain is already looking at reducing the number of design drawings through 3D collaboration, efficiencies of design and saving time. If the full industry uses these models and a ‘model first’ approach, which we embrace, it makes delivery more efficient.

“From when a drawing comes from the printer into a workflow, the jobs with the ‘model first’ approach have reduced the number of iterations by 75%. So, the cost and time savings are significant. We employ the biggest design team in the access industry, so this approach works well for us.”



Attracting talent

Through a range of graduate and apprenticeship opportunities, Integral Cradles has been able to attract talented people into the building access industry who have higher skills than ever before. Kevin says the company's focus is on employing good, skilled people – regardless of their background.

“This approach has created a diverse workforce for us of different demographics with a great blend of skills and experience.” He said.

Looking to the future

Looking ahead, Integral Cradles aims to adapt and innovate in response to a changing market. Kevin emphasises the importance of maintaining the company's core values while exploring new opportunities in sectors like rail and offshore.

“The development of kinetic architecture, where buildings are designed to allow parts of the structure to move without reducing structural integrity, means there are opportunities to work on all kinds of buildings in different sectors, so the future looks bright for access solutions. Our focus has always been on delivering technical excellence and trusted engineering solutions,” He concluded.

“As we embark on the next 20 years, we remain committed to this ethos, driving innovation and aiming to exceed expectations in every project.”

For more information about Integral Cradles and its projects, visit www.integralcradles.com.