

# How can your firm cut down on paper forms? Read how this accountancy firm is on a mission to file as many forms as they can electronically.

Now Companies House has extended their WebFiling service to include the filing of audit exempt accounts, Paul Evans of Langard Lifford Hall in Birmingham tells how his firm considers dispensing with paper whenever possible to file company documents.

Nearly 60 staff at Langard Lifford Hall keep busy with up to 750 limited companies. "We do everything from tax returns to bookkeeping, management accounts, audited accounts, corporation tax, tax planning, management advice, acquisitions, mergers and sales."

## Loads of forms, piles of paper

The firm is a sizeable filer, submitting annual returns, annual accounts, secretary and director changes, registered office address changes, share capital changes, incorporations, mortgages, debentures, change in directors' particulars and resolutions.

## Off paper and online

It was the practicalities of electronic filing that prompted Paul to consider WebFiling. "With a lot of paper coming through the office, it made sense to file electronically. The information is registered at Companies

House almost immediately – by paper, it can take considerably longer."

"It's the saving in postage as well. With the number of clients and the amount of documents that go out, it's much easier and more convenient too."

## Intelligent checks for smart processing

"WebFiling reduces the mistakes with built-in checks. You know if a company has missed a date of birth for the director, which is always a big one with paper forms. The checks are useful if you need to fill in the SIC code on a first annual return – somebody always forgets, and it causes me trauma when they come back rejected. Security wise we've had no issues. In fact we've had two or three clients who applauded the fact that we were now electronic filing because they felt it was more secure."

## Filing it all electronically

Now Paul's firm files anything it can electronically with Companies House, "...changes in directorships, changes in registered office, allotments of shares. We've just started doing abbreviated accounts and hope to move forward to the point where we're actually



Paul Evans, Langard Lifford Hall

filing the document electronically from our accounting package to Companies House."

## It's pens down for all new clients

Filing electronically is now a matter of course at Langard Lifford Hall. Each new limited company receives a client introduction pack, which includes a form to sign up for electronic filing with Companies House. It's now taken as read that when an annual return comes in for filing, it's filed electronically.

Paul admits that providing seamless electronic interaction with Companies House adds to the impression of a well-run organisation and an overall quality of service for their clients.

The WebFiling service provides a secure system allowing you to submit company information online. **Consider WebFiling for many reasons:**

- direct from your computer, so you save time
- inbuilt checks and pre-populated data means less chance for rejection
- most secure method to submit
- annual returns filed for half the cost
- audit exempt accounts now accepted

For more information visit us at [www.companieshouse.gov.uk/evolve](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/evolve)



Companies House  
— for the record —

# Now accounts can be filed electronically with WebFiling, nearly all company information can be filed online. Here's how one company prepared to go digital.

With client details already on an electronic database, Scottish law firm Thorntons Law LLP were well prepared for WebFiling, the online document filing service from Companies House. Linda Muir and Iain Hutcheson explain how their clients took to paperwork being electronically filed.

Iain and Linda work in the Dundee office of Thorntons, a firm of solicitors with five offices in Scotland, employing around 350 people, offering legal, property and investment services including company formation and secretarial services.

Iain, a partner working in Business Law, talks about Thorntons' clients and company formation and secretarial services, "We have clients we provide annual company secretarial services for and we also electronically incorporate around 80 companies a year. Our clients tend to be from the SME sector, plus we do work with PLCs, a number of LLPs, partnerships and one or two unlimited companies."

Linda, the company secretarial administrator, initiated the digital storage of client information, and from there it was a natural step to WebFiling, "It was time for us to have an electronic

database, so I arranged to get the information for around 400 clients together. It was more efficient to do this from our own database, and the cost of filing annual returns online is only £15."

## Companies House Direct – the online research tool

Linda has also used Companies House Direct since 2001, the subscription service for accessing company information. "We've seen a big change, because before Companies House Direct, we were ordering microfiche from searchers and then printing it all out – this whole process took a number of days. Now we keep tabs on everything much more quickly. It's a great service."

## File one, file all electronically

Filing electronically has made an impact on Thorntons, as Iain explains, "Where we can, we submit documents online. I think doing away with filing the paper copy of annual returns has been the most successful development. The move from paper to non-paper is the most secure way for us to file, as well as being a money-saver."

Linda adds, "Especially with the new rates of postage. Also, the email receipt that you get is helpful and I can have approval sometimes within an hour."



Linda Muir, Thorntons Law LLP

## The way forward

Linda is planning more electronic filing, especially now the filing of abbreviated and dormant company accounts is available through WebFiling, "We file dormant accounts for around 20 to 25 clients – I'm going to start to do these on-line."

"We've had 100% take-up of WebFiling from our clients – we're very pleased."

Information can also be filed online using some accountancy software packages, without having to re-input data.

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# “It’s also allowed us to reduce our fees to our clients because processing doesn’t take as long anymore.”

PM&M Chartered Accountants in the North West were early adopters of the Companies House online filing system, when they began using it back in 1998, shortly after it was first introduced. Anne Ramsden tells us why they chose to go electronic, and explains the benefits that she and her colleagues continue to enjoy.

## From novices to masters

“I guess we were guinea pigs to start with, but my boss was keen for us to try software filing, as were Digita, the providers of our secretarial software, so we gave it a go.”

Anne explains how easy it was, “We already manage all our clients’ data using the Digita package, so filing online was the next step.”

Software filing allows you to electronically file information direct to Companies House using a secretarial software package, available from a growing number of software providers.

“It’s different to WebFiling. I file my own forms at home with WebFiling, because my husband has a company, and that’s really easy, but it’s just as easy using a software package.”

Software filing allows you to submit company information online directly from a growing number of available software packages.

### Consider software filing for many reasons:

- direct from your computer, so you save time
- less chance for rejection than on paper
- most secure method to submit
- audit exempt accounts now accepted

For list of software providers, please visit:  
[www.companieshouse.gov.uk/softwarefiling](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/softwarefiling)

More than eight years since they started, PM&M now sign up new clients automatically to electronic filing. “More than 50% of our client base are now online, and we aim to sign up the rest by the end of the year”, adds Anne.

## Saving time, saving money

Anne is confident that the system has saved them and their clients time and money. “The main advantage is speed. But it also reduces the risk of making mistakes, because unless you get the forms absolutely right Companies House will reject them.”

“It’s also allowed us to reduce our fees to our clients because processing doesn’t take as long anymore. For example, if a change of registered office was done on paper, which is just one simple form, I have to print that off, send it with a letter – ‘please sign this’. The client has to send it back for me to then send it to Companies House – it’s a lot of time.”

For Anne and her colleagues, the electronic face of Companies House is now very much part of their daily routine.



Anne Ramsden,  
PM&M Chartered Accountants

“We use software filing and Companies House Direct daily, these online services are really good.”



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