

Delivering effective FM for listed buildings

3 years ago



Preserving the architectural integrity and historical value of listed buildings while maintaining their functionality and safety can be a complex endeavour.

If you are a custodian of a listed building and are looking to outsource your facilities management then it is important to find a supplier that has the dedicated expertise and comprehensive understanding of the challenges these types of buildings might present.

Here, Richard Theobald, operations director at Precision FM talks about the importance of working with an FM company that can deliver services tailored to the unique needs of listed structures.

Planned and Prepared

Managing listed buildings can often be a process that requires patience and diligent planning. Any significant renovation or structural change must be meticulously planned to maintain the historical and architectural import of the building, as per legal requirements.

This often necessitates a prolonged planning phase compared to standard buildings, which could potentially slow down the typically rapid pace of FM operations. Your FM company should be well-versed in managing the intricacies of the planning process and understand the importance of such procedures in preserving architectural heritage.

As you might imagine, there are distinct challenges in the maintenance and cleaning of such structures. The age and delicate nature of materials used in their construction can make routine tasks, such as boiler repairs or other utility maintenance, quite complex.

Many listed buildings also have unique architectural features such as narrow staircases, low ceilings, and

sprawling floor plans that require real expertise when implementing any form of building management. An FM company should use its hands-on experience and training, arriving at each historic location with the nuanced knowledge necessary to carefully execute tasks the right way.

For example, at a listed church we look after in central London, there are constructed walkways used as safe routes for personnel to move around without stepping on unsafe or fragile rafters. Our specialist team are then able to perform maintenance and cleaning work with minimal disturbance to the original architectural features.

Meticulous Maintenance

Older buildings are often susceptible to problems like dampness, electrical issues, and structural concerns.

Damp can really wreak havoc to old structures if given the chance. It's easy to notice the less effective damp proofing techniques employed during their construction and experts can get to work resolving the issue without structural changes. This might involve increasing ventilation, deploying humidifiers, or increasing the temperature across the building.

Electrical systems in, for example, a castle obviously aren't period. But they might be housed in tight spots or around structural elements that date from the original construction. Despite this, it is important that they still adhere to the latest compliance and legislative requirements, and so your FM company should be able to ensure that the relevant 21st century compliance standards are met, no matter the age of the building.

Issues related to the structural integrity of these aged structures are common, given the natural wear and tear they undergo over time. FM teams should be adept at recognising and effectively addressing these issues, ensuring the safety and longevity of architecturally significant buildings for future generations.

Conscientious Cleaning

Selecting the right products for cleaning and repairs of listed buildings is another crucial aspect that FM supervisors take into consideration. Modern cleaning agents or repair materials may not be suitable for use in these structures due to their potential to harm the delicate, often aged, materials.

Cleaning staff should be given a thorough tour of every building before they begin the job. It's important that every colleague is made aware of specific areas, or items of particular historical note so that the most appropriate cleaning tools are chosen for the job.

Meeting health and safety standards is crucial in all buildings, and listed buildings are no exception. When working within a listed building, your FM team should always arrive with the right regulatory framework in focus.

Managing listed buildings isn't limited to churches and castles but extends to all forms of historic architecture that must be preserved for posterity. Expertise and experience with listed buildings is always in demand to cater for the unique needs of such structures, ensuring their fantastic architectural legacy remains intact while they continue to serve the needs of the modern world.