

The challenges of providing super prime maintenance for super prime properties

11 months ago



Super prime properties in the UK represent the pinnacle of the luxury real estate market, typically valued at £10 million or more. These properties are often located in prestigious areas of central London, particularly Mayfair, Chelsea and Knightsbridge.

In recent years, super prime properties have attracted ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs), seeking both status and a secure investment, often from affluent regions like North America, Asia, and The Middle East. As a result, super prime properties continue to command high prices, with some landmark deals exceeding £150 million.

Steve McGregor, group managing director, DMA Group tells us more.

Unique maintenance challenges

As the market demands high-calibre properties, the maintenance of them must also be of high quality. FM and building maintenance teams are expected to pull out all the stops to ensure these buildings run seamlessly, all while meeting safety and compliance regulations.

Often serviced by luxury facilities, the make-up of super prime properties is complex, where spas, restaurants, bars, swimming pools, gyms, and members' lounges are commonplace. Properties with contemporary architecture also face specific challenges due to irregular shapes, specialised materials, and bespoke system integration.

Accessibility

A building's design may impede the planned maintenance activity or make repairs more difficult; a situation at odds with a customer-base that expects nothing less than perfection. Noise, downtime, unsightly works, and facilities out of action will not be tolerated by discerning super-prime customers.

Planning maintenance in this environment should centre around creating schedules that are the least disruptive. For example, properties with international owners may have periods where their properties are unoccupied. This would be an ideal time to conduct routine maintenance. Occupiers

who are celebrities or leading businesspeople are also likely to have commitments that leave a residency empty for a period of time.

Equipment may aid in reducing the impact on owners and the image of the building. Scaffolding can be avoided by employing cherry pickers, rope access, or even drones for hard-to-reach areas.

Communication

Super prime properties are more likely to have larger teams working for them. As a result, communication must be optimal between everyone involved. Collaboration breakdown occurs when different parties don't provide each other with sufficient access, or don't communicate complete information.

Maintenance specialists need to understand the expected standards, service levels, frequency of works, and required tasks. An assessment of what is installed in a building and any plans for additional upgrades, will help works to be planned and costed appropriately. An inventory list (also known as an asset register) that fails to contain correct or complete results will cause delays, unsatisfactory outcomes, and the potential for pre-defined budgets to be exceeded.

Resident awareness

Property owners, particularly UHNWI's, may not fully appreciate the importance of effective maintenance strategies. Their desire for excellence and sometimes privacy and security (particularly celebrities) can hinder maintenance professionals from performing essential preventative tasks, some of which are necessary to meet legal requirements. As a result, maintenance is often deferred until after issues have arisen, leading to a situation where multiple faults can develop. These overlapping issues can obscure the root causes, making it difficult for them to be addressed effectively on the first attempt, ultimately resulting in increased costs, delays and owner frustration.

The harsh reality is despite the size and splendour, these are people's homes. Emotions can run high when things don't go to plan, whatever the reason might be.

To communicate effectiveness, maintenance teams should point out that the upkeep of a building protects its value. Preventative, proactive maintenance can save money in the long run by avoiding major issues.

Technology

Technology plays a crucial role in maintaining super prime properties, enhancing efficiency, reducing disruption, and ensuring the highest standards of upkeep. Building Management Systems (BMS) monitor and control various aspects of the property, such as heating, ventilation, air conditioning

(HVAC), lighting, and security. Equally, the very best in home entertainment systems, including home

cinemas and the very best kitchen and hospitality equipment, means technology is embedded throughout these residences.

Some maintenance companies have developed their own digital service management platforms to provide automation and make their own workflows more efficient. This will help with unobtrusive maintenance practices that ensure a building runs as it should, minimising the impact on residents as far as practical. Our service management platform, BiO®, tracks and manages all parts of the maintenance service, including our own staff and service partners, helping to identify when works can be carried out in the least disruptive fashion. Providing live operational status and performance data through our BiO® platform to every stakeholder is transformational.

This approach also leads to high levels of 'right first time' repairs and maintenance, ensuring engineers turn up to their site with the appropriate tools and qualifications.

Experience

By selecting an experienced, integrated maintenance provider, owners and occupiers of super prime buildings can be assured of a responsive, high-quality service. They will also benefit from access to skilled resources and the ability to leverage technology that simplifies and streamlines maintenance, while ensuring complete transparency. This approach not only saves time but also reduces the need to coordinate with multiple contractors.

Establishing early collaboration among all stakeholders is crucial in this marketplace. Where the figures run into the hundreds of millions, everyone needs to be on the same page to create a seamless experience for some of the world's most discerning customers.