

Measuring the state helps save money

The City of Mechelen owns some two hundred buildings of very wide-ranging types, sizes, ages and functions. Twenty of these are designated as large, including the Cultural Centre, the Municipal Theatre and the historic city hall. The desire for optimised maintenance and management of these assets has led to cooperation with a specialist partner.

Bart Permentier, technical engineer of the Buildings Department: “We felt the need to gain an overall picture of all the buildings, and more especially their exact current state of repair, with a view to then drafting as optimal a long-term maintenance plan as possible on the basis of our findings. Knowing exactly what the state of repair of each building is enables you to draw up a plan of action with objectively determined priorities and in this way to budget as accurately as possible: in short, to plan for the buildings to be maintained in the best possible condition in the future”. To draw up an analysis of a building’s state of repair, uniform and neutral reporting is essential. Reporting of this kind differs radically from what the users of buildings may or may not report via the helpdesk.

In the Netherlands is to be found Asset Facility Management, a company that has been active here for 30 years. Rob Boelen, Maintenance Consulting Manager: “Building state-of-repair measurement originated in the United Kingdom in the 1970s. In the Netherlands it was quickly picked up by the Government Buildings Agency, which has worked the methodology into a maintenance standardisation system. Today measurement of this kind is very widespread and is used by many companies. We use the NEN-2767 standard for the measurement; at the moment this is still a Dutch standard, but will undoubtedly be internationalised at European level”.

Phased approach

In an initial phase, the City of Mechelen will have 12 buildings assessed by Asset Facility Management. These represent a mix of old buildings and recent buildings – the smallest is the Muizen town hall with a surface area of 500 m² and the largest is the city hall. “This first step is part of a growth process within the building management procedure carried out by the City of Mechelen”, explains Bart Permentier. “The idea is to complete the exercise

with this selection of buildings, with the aim of being able to see where the process can take us and being able to propose specific measures to the city council so that the necessary budgets can be earmarked for them”.

Registration of defects

State-of-repair measurement involves all a building’s defects being recorded. Every defect is detected, established and listed, and is then given a classification, a process for which there are valuation scales. The classification of a defect is influenced by the stage to which the damage has progressed and its size. This results in a state-of-repair score of 1 to 6, where ‘1’ represents perfectly good condition, ‘2’ is average, ‘3’ denotes acceptable, and so on. The assessment is in theory done by multidisciplinary personnel, but for large buildings additional experts are sometimes called in.

Rob Boelen: “In addition to the actual state-of-repair measurement we can also take care of the complete digitalisation of all available information on a building, enabling its incorporation into the desktop management software. This covers, for example, all maintenance contracts, inspections, certificates, etc. that are currently applicable or in force. At the moment this is not yet included in the project with the City of Mechelen, but the intention is for this to happen eventually”.

Building state-of-repair measurement is a key factor in the context of calls for tenders for maintenance contracts but is equally important in the assessment of current contracts and the contractors bound by them. However, state-of-repair measurement also proves to be worthwhile in the case of new development, for the drafting of the most appropriate maintenance plans designed to ensure that the building is maintained ‘in the desired condition’ for as long as possible. A state-of-repair measurement on completion and handover can be tested against the state of repair after one year’s use by way of a maintenance check. Obviously a certain margin has

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of repair of buildings

to be taken into account to allow for acceptable damage as a result of use, but how large or small that may be is something that has to be defined by the party taking the initiative to have the state-of-repair measurement done.

Initial findings

Bart Permentier: "Parallel to the state-of-repair measurement we asked Asset Facility Management to draw up an inventory of all technical equipment in the buildings, such as various detectors, light fittings, and anything that could serve to provide as much detail as possible in requests for offers or calls for tender and for the drafting of maintenance contracts". Asset Facility Management gives the client noncommittal advice further to the state-of-repair measurement and in consideration of the theoretical useful life of various types of equipment linked to the risks of non-repair or non-replacement, and this results in a priority code. Rob Boelen: "If necessary the client can compare our advice with comments he has received from users of the buildings in order to draw up a plan of action that is as accurate and targeted as possible".

Bart Permentier: "When we had a look at the reports on the first series of buildings we were somewhat shocked at the high costs involved in restoring the buildings to a sound state of repair and then maintaining them in that condition. And it's not just the maintenance and repair of the old buildings, either. The City of Mechelen has grown very rapidly



Rob Boelen,
Maintenance Consulting Manager
Asset Facility Management

in recent years, and this has also led to a large number of new development schemes. To keep the costs down during the useful life of those buildings, these need to be kept 'new' for as long as possible thanks to the right approach being adopted. This calls for adapted policy choices and budgets".

Building state-of-repair measurement is an essential tool for the correct planning and accurate budgeting of maintenance work and is consequently a practical way of limiting and closely monitoring maintenance costs.

Eduard CODDÉ ■



From left to right working for the City of Mechelen : Bart Permentier, Technical engineer of the Buildings Department, Petra De Kempeneer, Architect responsible for the building management division, Sven Cuyt, Advisor, Head of Buildings department