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# A MAN WITH A PLAN

*A planned maintenance programme could save you time and money*  
says **JULIAN DAVIES**

**THE VAGARIES OF THE** English weather together with day-to-day wear and tear mean that all buildings deteriorate over time. Changes to legislation and statutory requirements also affect the standards by which properties are judged. For leaseholders, it is vital that these changes are effectively managed and their block kept safe and sound, while avoiding major disruption and financial cost. If they are neglected, even the most beautiful buildings can - quite literally - fall apart, as demonstrated by the sad demise of Brighton's West Pier.

The best way to avoid significant deterioration in the state of your building is to not wait to correct and repair serious faults, but to organise planned maintenance. That doesn't just mean keeping the property clean, but setting out a clear, long-term set of measures to keep it in prime condition.

## PLAN AHEAD

A Planned Maintenance Programme (PMP) should cover everything from structural checks to re-decorating and gutter clearing. And although not dramatic, its effects can be hugely beneficial. Also, when there are a group of leaseholders collectively responsible for repairs, a comprehensive PMP can avoid disputes, which often require expensive resolutions.

The key to getting planned maintenance right is to develop a programme of maintenance work that is comprehensive, well-organised and affordable. A PMP is a vital tool to help managing agents or property owners set reliable levels of service charge expenditure or reserve funds for the cost of future repair and maintenance of a building.

## WHO CAN HELP?

To put an effective PMP in place for your block, you should commission a professional - preferably a chartered building surveyor - to draw up a costed schedule of works for you that will identify any work that needs to be done urgently and pinpoint future maintenance issues.



## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- Ongoing compliance with statutory obligations.
- Greater control over expenditure and reduced risk of future cost.
- Maintaining the underlying value of the property.
- Maintaining the standard and presentation of the block.
- Minimising the need for emergency and reactive maintenance.
- Avoiding disputes, since all parties can contribute to the plan.

Don't wait to repair faults or you could face bigger bills further down the line

The first step is for the surveyor to produce a detailed survey of your building so that any necessary work on the building can be prioritised and to ensure that any initial structural work is carried out at the same time to create economies of scale in terms of fixed costs like scaffolding.

## WHAT WILL IT COST?

Once this work has been carried out, the surveyor should be able to put in place a plan to demonstrate the best way to maintain the building in that condition, avoiding any spikes in expenditure. Depending on the size of the property, the detailed plan and cost schedule should only cost between £500-£2000. This is a small price to pay for the reassurance and issue-avoidance that it creates. Once this framework is in place, RMC directors will be able to monitor and update the PMP regularly and a review by a surveyor should only be necessary once every two or three years.

I recently visited a small block in very poor condition, with a backlog of maintenance spanning 20 years. Many significant defects could have been easily avoided by regular maintenance. When I explained the collective cost of all the work that would

now be required, the residents were shocked. Particularly as there was no sinking fund to cover them.

My advice is to avoid that worry and unnecessary expense and invest in a PMP. Your property may not currently look or feel like the West Pier, but it's worth ensuring that it stays that way! ●

To download a sample of a **PMP report and cost schedule**, go to the **Flat Living website** at [www.flat-living.co.uk](http://www.flat-living.co.uk)

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**Earl Kendrick Associates** is a firm of chartered surveyors specialising in the residential block sector, with offices in London and the South West.

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