

Viewpoint: Why climate change is forcing a rethink on planned building assessments

‘Maintain, upgrade & refurbish’: why attitudes towards the built environment must evolve as climate change accelerates, writes Screening Eagle Technologies’ [Peter Stenov](#)

The recent UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report could not have been clearer. With a key temperature limit being broken in little more than a decade, and extreme weather events seemingly making the headlines on a weekly basis, the Panel had no hesitation in declaring a “code red for humanity” (1).

The same observation could easily be applied to the built environment. Buildings and structures are already paying a high price for the effects of climate change. For example, increased incidents of serious fires and flooding present huge risks to buildings and structures – and a worrying number of new developments continue to take place on flood plains. It is clear: building owners and operators will need to plan more rigorously for climate-linked natural disasters.

We are also facing another crisis in the built environment due to ageing building stocks and – often erratic approaches to maintenance. The ‘fix when broken’ approach to maintenance has far-reaching impacts – ranging from operational inefficiencies to structural failures that spell grave threats to human life. With climate change set to make these occurrences even more common, it’s clear that we have to become far more proactive with regard to maintaining buildings’ structural integrity.

Then there is another factor that compels us to shift the focus away from new buildings towards better maintenance of existing ones. Although it’s true that well-designed new structures can be operated more efficiently, there are huge amounts of embodied CO₂ in all structures. With even the most sustainable of building programmes likely to result in huge CO₂ emissions, it’s apparent that the current tendency towards demolition and fresh construction does not provide a valid roadmap for the future.

Our message is simple: the emphasis has to shift towards protecting the structural integrity of existing buildings and making sure that their operational lifecycles are as long and efficient as possible. Fortunately, this has recently become considerably easier thanks to the advent of [intelligent building inspection technologies](#) such as those developed by Screening Eagle.



Proactive maintenance

Developed to empower building owners, inspectors and engineers to protect the structural health of assets, our [Screening Eagle INSPECT software](#) enables the collection of data in an easier, richer and more structured way. Implementing planned building assessments and using Inspect on a regular basis means companies have a greatly improved chance of detecting issues at a formative stage – in other words, before they can develop into serious and costly problems. Adopting a ‘preventative maintenance’ ethos becomes far easier when you have so much quality data to base your decisions upon.

Of course, it’s not just having the right tools that makes the difference. Our experience tells us that, in many organisations, responsibilities for structural health continue to be poorly-defined. Also, it continues to be the case that too many companies do not schedule building repairs in a methodical way, or assign enough funds in the annual budget to carry out all work that is required.

So with all the challenges that lie ahead, it’s apparent that the new emphasis on proactive maintenance will have to be accompanied by a change of mindset. But with powerful solutions such as Inspect now within easy reach of all built environment stakeholders, there is cause to hope that transition will accelerate during the next few years.

If you’re the owner or operator of a structural asset or a building and want to learn more about the ways in which our Inspect Technology can add long-term value to your operations, we’d love to give you a no-obligation demo. [Follow the links to register.](#)

Source:

(1) Secretary-General Calls Latest IPCC Climate Report ‘Code Red for Humanity’, Stressing ‘Irrefutable’ Evidence of Human Influence [Link](#)

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