

FAÇADE ACCESS BMU V ROPE ACCESS- CASE STUDY (P.2)

... Including the HSE representative. Although the cradle would offer a stable working platform, concerns were expressed about

- areas difficult to access such as the corners and areas under the 'belly'
- The requirement to maintain the cradle equipment over the life of the building, when inspection and maintenance regimes can degrade.
- The difficulty of ensuring only trained and competent personnel operate and use the equipment over the life of the building
- The cost of constructing an elaborate support system for the cradle to operate from.

By comparison, the rope access option allowed cleaning of all areas of the facade, but only by skilled and experienced practitioners who would inspect and maintain their own equipment and would only require sufficient anchorage points to be designed and installed in the building's structure to allow access to all areas.

After careful deliberation, it was concluded that this was an option worth taking forward. Meetings were then held with specialist access providers and a solution was developed, with a rope access strategy being adopted at a saving of around £750,000. By contrast, access to the underside of the atrium roof was deemed to be best served by a cradle system, due to the configuration of the stepped glazing.

Key learning points:-

1. Early appointment of the **principal designer** allowed consideration of cleaning methodology to be developed before major design decisions had been taken. Although a key CDM issue, cleaning and associated access issues are often overlooked by project teams until the project is well advanced and the opportunity to select safer, and sometimes cheaper, solutions is restricted.
2. Initial hazard/risk assessment was carried out as a team activity, giving individual designers a clearer appreciation of which issues were to be given close attention during the detailed design phase.
3. Consideration of the Principles of Prevention would tend to suggest a cradle solution over rope access (giving collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures - Regulation 4, Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations). However, a 'suitable and sufficient risk assessment' requires a project team to consider all the factors relevant to that specific situation.
4. By involving specialist access providers in the process, the design team could feel more confident that their solution was not introducing greater risk than that being mitigated.

