# Balfour Beatty invests £7.2m in AI to boost productivity and safety across UK projects



Balfour Beatty has announced a £7.2 million investment in Microsoft 365 Copilot, one of the largest AI deployments in the UK construction and infrastructure sector to date. The AI assistant will be embedded across the company’s Microsoft 365 applications within its secure IT environment, aiming to significantly enhance productivity and safety across nationwide operations.

The move is part of Balfour Beatty’s broader digital transformation strategy, which also includes technologies such as virtual reality, biometrics and digital permitting. According to McKinsey Global Institute data, tech adoption in infrastructure can lift productivity by up to 15%—a gap Balfour Beatty is determined to close.

Microsoft 365 Copilot automates routine tasks, easing mental strain and allowing site teams to focus on higher-value work. Early employee feedback is strong: 75% report improved work quality, 77% experience less mental load, and 78% say communication has improved. Two-thirds of staff said they prefer roles where Copilot is available.

In parallel, Balfour Beatty and Microsoft are piloting AI-powered “smart agents” to support quality, health and safety processes. One such agent is being trialled on the A9 dualling project in Scotland, where it automates early-stage reviews of Inspection and Test Plans (ITPs)—a task previously requiring engineers to spend hours per review. By identifying outdated templates and prompting technical input, the tool improves speed, consistency and quality assurance.

Avoidable construction errors cost the industry an estimated £10 billion annually and contribute to 40% of safety incidents. By streamlining ITP reviews and freeing engineers to focus on problem-solving, the AI tool directly addresses these challenges.

“This investment demonstrates our commitment to harnessing the full potential of digital innovation to drive productivity and support our people,” said Leo Quinn, Group Chief Executive. “Expanding access to Copilot is the natural next step in our digital transformation.”

Jon Ozanne, Chief Information Officer, added that the partnership with Microsoft ensures both competitiveness and cybersecurity. Darren Hardman, CEO of Microsoft UK & Ireland, called the collaboration “a strong example of how AI is already having a measurable impact in the construction sector.”

Balfour Beatty’s AI investment marks a significant moment for the industry, aligning with wider efforts to modernise UK infrastructure. With a focus on ethical AI use, data security and operational efficiency, the company is helping to define a smarter, safer future for construction.

Created by [Amplify](https://www.hbmadvisory.com/amplify): AI-augmented, human-curated content.

## Bibliography

1. <https://railuk.com/rail-technology/balfour-beatty-unveils-7-2-million-ai-investmenttransforming-how-britain-builds/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.balfourbeatty.com/media-centre/latest/balfour-beatty-unveils-72-million-ai-investment-transforming-how-britain-builds/> - Balfour Beatty has announced a £7.2 million investment in Microsoft 365 Copilot, marking one of the largest AI investments in the UK construction and infrastructure sector. This AI-powered assistant, integrated within Microsoft 365 applications, will operate securely within Balfour Beatty’s IT environment, aiming to enhance productivity and deliver smarter, faster, and safer outcomes across numerous projects nationwide. The initiative aligns with the McKinsey Global Institute's findings, which highlight a 14–15% productivity uplift in infrastructure and construction through technology adoption. Additionally, Balfour Beatty is collaborating with Microsoft to develop AI-powered 'smart agents' to improve Quality, Health & Safety, and Assurance processes, with the first trial focusing on the A9 project in Scotland. These agents aim to automate manual review processes, allowing engineers to concentrate on high-value tasks and ultimately boosting productivity.
3. <https://ukstories.microsoft.com/features/how-balfour-beatty-is-using-copilot-to-drive-productivity-at-scale/> - Balfour Beatty, a leading infrastructure firm with 27,000 employees, is leveraging Microsoft's AI technologies, particularly Microsoft 365 Copilot, to enhance productivity and safety across its projects. The company has integrated Copilot into its operations, aiming to eliminate inefficiencies and inaccuracies that lead to rework and safety incidents. Early surveys indicate that 75% of employees feel Copilot has improved their work, with significant reductions in mental effort for routine tasks and enhanced communication. The AI tool assists in aggregating and unifying data, streamlining workflows, and supporting decision-making processes. Balfour Beatty is also exploring the development of AI agents for tasks such as inspection and test plan reviews, route optimisation for highways maintenance, and ecology survey automation, with the goal of reducing human risk and improving project outcomes.
4. <https://constructiondigital.com/news/how-balfour-beatty-boosted-productivity-with-microsoft-ai> - Balfour Beatty has deployed Microsoft 365 Copilot across its 27,000-strong workforce to improve efficiency and project safety. The AI assistant aims to address the £10 billion issue of avoidable construction mistakes, which are responsible for 40% of safety incidents in the industry. By integrating Copilot into daily workflows, Balfour Beatty seeks to eliminate rework, reduce costs, and enhance safety. The AI tool automates tasks using natural language prompts across the company's existing Microsoft system, including SharePoint, OneDrive, and Teams. Early user surveys reveal that 75% find Copilot enhances their work, 77% spend less mental effort on routine tasks, 78% see improved communication, and 66% would seek roles where Copilot is available. The company is also exploring the development of AI agents for tasks such as inspection and test plan reviews, route optimisation for highways maintenance, and ecology survey automation.
5. <https://www.pbctoday.co.uk/news/digital-construction-news/construction-technology-news/balfour-beatty-announces-7-2m-investment-in-copilot-ai/153742/> - Balfour Beatty has announced a £7.2 million investment in Microsoft 365 Copilot, one of the largest AI investments in the UK construction and infrastructure industry. The AI-powered assistant, embedded within Microsoft 365 applications, will operate securely within Balfour Beatty’s IT environment, aiming to enhance productivity and deliver smarter, faster, and safer outcomes across numerous projects nationwide. The initiative aligns with the McKinsey Global Institute's findings, which highlight a 14–15% productivity uplift in infrastructure and construction through technology adoption. Additionally, Balfour Beatty is collaborating with Microsoft to develop AI-powered 'smart agents' to improve Quality, Health & Safety, and Assurance processes, with the first trial focusing on the A9 project in Scotland. These agents aim to automate manual review processes, allowing engineers to concentrate on high-value tasks and ultimately boosting productivity.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A9_dualling_project> - The A9 dualling project is an ongoing infrastructure initiative in Scotland to upgrade the A9 between Perth and Inverness from a single carriageway to a dual carriageway. The project aims to enhance road safety and reduce head-on collisions by providing safer overtaking opportunities. The project was announced in November 2011, with construction starting in September 2015. Originally scheduled for completion in 2025, the project has faced delays, and as of 2025, two out of eleven sections have been completed, totaling 11 miles (17 km), leaving 77 miles (124 km) to be upgraded. The project is expected to be completed by 2035, with ongoing work to improve road safety and infrastructure in the region.