



A CLEAR VIEW, NOT A CAGE

Effi Wolff of Balcony Systems Ltd explains an innovative and no-maintenance solution for new build and refurbishment balcony projects.

Balconies are always an attractive feature of a building and popular with developers and residents alike, adding to the desirability and enjoyment of properties. However, balconies are exposed constantly to the extremes of weather that can take its toll over the years on both their structural integrity and appearance.

This is particularly the case where timber, painted or galvanised steel has been used for balustrading bars or railings. So not surprisingly, regular maintenance or renovation is essential to prevent deterioration and maintain a smart appearance.

Of course, this can be time-consuming, costly and a hassle for the owners of such properties; whether they are individuals,

developers, housebuilders or property management companies.

Another disadvantage of using bars or railings is that they create a 'cage-like' appearance, which obscures the view, compromises aesthetics and reduces the amount of natural light to the interior. An innovative alternative to 'high-maintenance' and unsightly railed balconies is to use a glass and aluminium system, that not only requires no maintenance, apart from occasional cleaning, but also retains the view.

The inherent strength of both materials also offers tremendous creative design opportunities for both straight and curved glass balconies, as well as Juliette glass balconies. For the architect, a glazed balustrading system allows much greater freedom of design options, with the ability to create elegant Juliette and external balconies using straight or curved glass up to 3.8 metres without the need for vertical or corner posts.

The clean lines of glass enhance the minimalist and unobtrusive looks of the balcony, making it suitable for all architectural styles and applications.

Crucially, for properties in coastal areas exposed to the harsh marine environment, a glass panel and aluminium handrail is the ideal corrosion-resistant balcony choice. Handrails are available in a choice of finishes to suit property styles; powder-coated white or anodized silver, bronze or 'Royal Chrome', which replicates the look of stainless steel, but without the discolouration problems. Additionally, glass balustrading offers balcony users protection from the wind, enabling them to enjoy the views in comfort, a key selling point for seaside properties.

The above points are amply demonstrated in Northern Ireland where the recent launch of the Balcony system there has been well-received by architects, specifiers and developers seeking an affordable, aesthetic and maintenance-free alternative to traditional types of balustrading.

At an 80-apartment seaside complex near Portrush, a number of painted and galvanised steel balconies are already showing signs of corrosion and in need of serious maintenance just four years after installation.

Recognising this issue, developers PRH Construction used the Balcony system for its clean lines and corrosion-resistance on the final 11 apartments completed in December. According to PRH Construction Managing Director Raymond Henry, owners of the earlier discoloured steel balconies have already expressed an interest in the smart new ones.

"The glass and aluminium system does away with the problems of corrosion and the need for on-going maintenance, as well as keeping the sea views" he comments. "We shall be using it on our next development nearby."

For the individual homeowner, feedback from inquiries suggests that renewing old balconies is an increasing trend among those who are choosing to invest in improving the appearance and value of their properties, rather than move. For example, a customer in North Wales replaced rusty railings with a neater, clear glass balcony, which completely transformed the appearance and his enjoyment of it.

Simple to install, the six metre balustrade restored scenic views that were previously obscured by old wrought iron railings, which required regular, fiddly and time consuming painting.

As a balustrading solution, whatever the weather, glass and aluminium is clearly a winning combination for its aesthetics, versatility and ability to withstand the rigours of our climate.

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For more information, contact Balcony Systems Ltd on 01342 410411 or visit www.balconette.co.uk for further details.

