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CASE STUDY · MARLUC SYNOPSIS

Balfour Beatty Microsoft 365 Copilot rollout

IMPLEMENTED 2025–2026 · CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY · UK · BAND D · CLAIMED ONLY

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Balfour Beatty committed £7.2 million over four years to Microsoft 365 Copilot for its UK workforce of about 13,000 and began a trial of an AI agent that reviews inspection and test plans. The results come from the company, Microsoft and a company-submitted awards profile.

ABOUT THIS SYNOPSIS

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Facts and figures are as reported by the sources listed below, which may be incomplete, self-reported or out of date. Check the original source before relying on any figure.

The impact band, proof marker and SEAM view are MarLuc's opinion. The organisation is not a MarLuc client and has not reviewed or endorsed this synopsis. Names and trademarks belong to their owners.

NOTICE WORDING LAST UPDATED 16 NOVEMBER 2026

AT A GLANCE

AI used: Generative AI assistant: Microsoft 365 Copilot, plus a trial AI agent for inspection and test plan review.

Implemented: 2025–2026. Grade: band D, Task support, Claimed only.

Headline result, as reported: £7.2 million Copilot commitment; 75% of early adopters said it improved their work, by the company's survey; no audited saving reported

1 · The case

The facts, as reported by the 5 sources listed at the end. Where a source is silent, the field says "Not reported".

Organisation

Balfour Beatty plc. UK-based international infrastructure group with over 27,000 employees (company figure). Copilot went first to its UK workforce of about 13,000. Canvas block: 5. People and skills. Also 4. Operations and process, 6. Data and technology.

Business challenge

The challenge. By the company's account, rework takes time and money and carries health and safety risk because people return to work at short notice. Microsoft's story quotes the chief information officer citing a global construction report that 40% of safety incidents take place during rework, and an estimate that avoidable errors cost UK construction more than £10 billion

Who implemented it

Microsoft (Software vendor): Supplied Microsoft 365 Copilot and is partnering with the company to develop AI agents..
In-house (In-house): Ran readiness checks, the privacy assessment, policy updates, training and the champion network..
Any systems integrator or consultancy: Not reported.

Technology (SEAM pillar E)

SEAM types: T2 Embedded AI in existing software, T7 AI agents. Deployment: Vendor SaaS. Vendors and products: Microsoft, Microsoft 365 Copilot, AI agent for inspection and test plan review (first trial on the A9 project).

Where it was built in: Copilot sits inside Microsoft 365 applications within the company's IT environment. The agent trial reviews inspection and test plans on the A9 Dualling: Tomatin to Moy project in Scotland.

What changed

Before: staff worked in Microsoft 365 without a generative AI assistant. After, by the company's account: Copilot transcribes meetings, captures actions and finds information across Microsoft software, and a project director said it saved hours of manual review. The agent trial is at an early stage and no result is reported. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

What it cost

£7.2 million, a four-year commitment (company press release). Split between licences, training and programme cost: Not reported.

What it saved

No money saving is reported. The awards profile reports 31,248 hours of tasks assisted across 336,237 Copilot actions and a 5% quality improvement on a £100m contract; the method behind these figures is Not reported. Early-adopter survey: 75% felt Copilot had improved their work, 77% spent less mental effort on mundane tasks and 78% agreed it helped with communication. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

Governance and control

By the awards profile, the programme completed a data privacy impact assessment, updated policies on generative AI and acceptable use, baselined network performance and set cutover and rollback plans. The press release says Copilot operates within the company's compliant and confidential IT environment. Accountable owner for AI risk, review of outputs and controls for the agent: Not reported.

S2 · Accountable owner · Claimed
A Copilot transformation team ran the programme and the chief information officer fronts it publicly; a named owner for AI risk is not reported. [2] [4]

A1 · Safe use · Claimed
By the awards profile, the company completed a data privacy impact assessment and updated its policies on generative AI and IT acceptable use. [4]

A2 · Human in the loop · Not reported
Not reported.

A3 · Monitoring and assurance · Claimed
By the awards profile, network and infrastructure performance were baselined and monitored before go-live, with cutover and rollback plans. Monitoring of output quality is not reported. [4]

A4 · Vendor AI · Claimed
By the press release, Copilot operates within the company's compliant and confidential IT environment, distinct from publicly available tools. [1]

A5 · Agent controls · Not reported
An agent trial is under way on one project; controls for it are not reported. [1]

A6 · Standards and regulation · Not reported
Not reported.

What worked, what did not, what is unproven

WORKED

– The company reports 6,354 people using Copilot at least once in the first 12 weeks, which it says exceeded its 50% engagement target (awards profile).

– Early adopters said it helped: 75% felt it improved their work and 78% said it helped with communication (company survey).

– Project staff describe less time on note-taking and action tracking, and the chief information officer says finding information on historic jobs is now near instant (company statements).

DID NOT

– No audited figure for time or cost saved is reported. The survey and usage counts are the company's own.

– The 14–15% productivity uplift in the press release is a McKinsey Global Institute estimate for infrastructure and construction through technology adoption, quoted as potential. It is not a Balfour Beatty result.

– The A9 agent trial has no reported outcome in the sources opened.

UNPROVEN

– Whether the 31,248 hours of assisted tasks became time saved or cost reduced: Not reported.

– How the 5% quality improvement on a £100m contract was measured: Not reported.

– How many UK staff hold licences and whether use continued after launch: Not reported.

Timeline

Mar 2024 Company announces its AI development push at its full-year earnings call [5]

Mar 2025 Copilot transformation team formed for the UK workforce [4]

Jul 2025 £7.2 million four-year Copilot investment announced, with a first agent trial on the A9 project [1]

Jul 2025 Microsoft publishes a case story with an early-adopter survey [2]

Feb 2026 Awards profile reports usage counts, hours assisted and a quality figure [4]

2 · Grade and SEAM assessment

MarLuc's opinion, made on the evidence above. How cases are graded: marluc.co.uk/case-studies/how-we-rate

Level of change and impact

Claimed: Not applicable. Grade: D, Task support. Proof: Claimed only. Level of change: Task support.

Task support (Level 1, band D). Individuals do the same work with Copilot help. The agent trial targets one review step, and no change to roles, structure or cost is reported.

Staff use a general assistant for notes, search and drafting, with an agent trial for one review step. The reported results are survey answers, usage counts and one quality figure with no stated method. No change to roles, structure or cost is reported, so this is task support, and the marker is Claimed only.

The SEAM view and lessons learnt

The company put real structure around the rollout: a dedicated team, a privacy assessment, policy updates, training and a champion network. The results are usage counts and staff opinion, and the agent trial has no result yet. The adoption figure also needs care, because 6,354 users is under half of a 13,000 UK workforce and the profile does not say what the 50% target was measured against. For a mid-sized or larger organisation, the transferable point is to state the base for adoption figures and to turn hours assisted into a measured saving.

1. State the base for any adoption target before reporting it.
2. Turn hours assisted into measured time or cost saved.
3. Report agent trials with results, including trials that find no gain.

Evidence

Score 2 of 4. Own account: the company's press release, a Microsoft case story and a company-submitted awards profile, repeated by trade press. No audit or independent measurement.

Evaluation method. Company and vendor statements plus a company-submitted awards profile; staff survey and usage counts; no comparison group or audit.

3 · Original sources

Read these in full. To challenge a fact or a grade, use the contact form at marluc.co.uk or the link on https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/balfour-beatty-microsoft-365-copilot

[1] Balfour Beatty: Balfour Beatty unveils £7.2 million AI investment, transforming how Britain builds (press release, 31 July 2025)
https://www.balfourbeatty.com/media-centre/latest/balfour-beatty-unveils-72-million-ai-investment-transforming-how-britain-builds/

[2] Microsoft UK Stories: Breaking new ground: How Balfour Beatty is using Copilot to drive productivity at scale (31 July 2025)
https://ukstories.microsoft.com/?p=80388

[3] The Construction Index: Balfour Beatty invests £7.2m in Copilot (1 August 2025)
https://www.theconstructionindex.co.uk/news/view/balfour-beatty-invests-72m-in-copilot

[4] nima: Balfour Beatty, Copilot transformation team (reproduced from the Digital Construction Awards 2026 finalist profile, 26 February 2026)
https://wearenima.im/balfour-beatty-copilot-transformation-team/

[5] Construction Dive: Balfour Beatty invests in Microsoft AI (August 2025)
https://www.constructiondive.com/news/balfour-beatty-invests-microsoft-ai/757497/

Balfour Beatty plc website: https://www.balfourbeatty.com

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