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The Experience of Viewing the Grand Reopening of the University College of Estate Management in Reading, United Kingdom

The University College of Estate Management (UCEM), formerly the CEM, will celebrate its centennial in 2019. It was granted university college status in November 2015, when it assumed its current name. With the birth of the University College in Reading's town centre, the vibrant town of Reading is now home to two universities - the other one being the University of Reading.

I was very privileged to be invited to attend the grand reopening of the fully-refurbished building on 8 September. The new campus, named Horizons, signifies UCEM's aspiration to help students meet their future career goals.

Prior to the relocation, UCEM was based in the same location within the University of Reading's Whiteknights Campus for 40 years. The previous office, in the Urban Regional Studies (URS) Building, which is also known locally as the "Lego Building," has not only received an architectural award since it was built; it is also listed as a heritage building. Recently, the authority listed the URS as a Grade II Heritage site in three separate capacities: the building itself; the ground floor canopy, which is composed of a row of prefabricated beams; and the fish pond and fountain. The URS Building and former CEM home was a masterpiece during the peak of the system building and industrialisation era of the 1970s – characterised by prefabricated columns, cantilevered beams, and masonic prefabricated panels.

In comparison, Horizons is equally outstanding,

if not more so. The Horizons Project achieved a BREEAM Excellent rating as one of the first buildings certified against the BREEAM 2014 refurbishment and fit-out scheme (BREEAM is the world's leading sustainability assessment method). It is award-winning because it conforms to fully sustainable premises standards. It boasts many sustainable features including energy initiatives, building materials, water/hygiene, waste management, biodiversity, and transport – all of which add credence to its award. Amongst these features, the spatial arrangement was particularly impressive. Other outstanding features included the double-glazed windows giving abundant natural daylight; three office floors housing about 250 staff with very minimal partitioning; and a highly efficient, variable refrigeration air source that made the building's climate control very convenient. The previous partitions and doors were retained to save on construction costs and reduce waste, while the refurbishment process gave the old timber surface a new appearance without any trace of ageing. The carpet tiles were recycled from fishing nets floating on the oceans around the Philippines. This initiative removed a real threat to marine life and supplements the incomes of some of the poorest communities in the world. Horizons offers a secure, lockable bicycle storage area and shower facilities to complement the university's cycle-to-work scheme.

Horizons also recognises its history and the pioneers who helped make UCEM what it is today. There are rooms named after its past principals such as the Parry Room (after the scholar who authored Parry's Valuation and Conversion Tables), the Goodacre Room, and the Heyward (an Honourable Fellow of the HKIS). Each room is decorated with an oil painting portrait of a past principal.

On the Horizon's grand reopening day, many special guests were in attendance. Veteran honorary members, former principals, industry leaders, and the press were given a guided tour of the facilities on the three floors by members of

the senior leadership team. Many enthusiastic questions were asked by those familiar with the previous building, as they refreshed themselves on what they remembered about the previous offices compared to this environmentally-friendly, award-winning building.

In the past, it has received generous support from the Reading community. The city's town hall rooms have been used by the College for seminar classrooms and examination purposes. The grand reopening of Horizons was presided over by the Mayor of Reading, who cut the ribbon to signify the facility as officially reopened.

The town of Reading is full of scenic spots with lots of history and glory. Traces of the Roman Empire can be found at its Museum. The remains of the Roman city of Calleva, built 1,500 years ago, remind visitors that Reading was an important historic city. Its manufacture of some internationally-known products, including the 4 Bs – biscuits, bulbs, bricks, and beer – made

Reading very affluent. These are past glories, but the students at UCEM are now reminded of their Horizons in future years.

At the time of my visit, The Times reported that the Privy Council was going to approve a new university in Hereford that would abandon the traditional structure of a university. It may become a new model for technology and engineering in the UK. Since the programmes at UCEM are 100 percent online, its moves are likely to go along with this trend.

As it prepares to conclude its first century, UCEM has many numbers to fulfil. The number, "3727," printed on every staff member's lanyard, is particularly important, as it denotes the targeted student enrollment that has been achieved and will need to be passed to achieve the institution's growth aspirations. This figure reminds staff members of the need to show no letup in their efforts. As a Hong Kong academic, I admire Reading's thrust, momentum, zeal, and zest.

Members Corner Needs Contributions from You!

Editorial Board invites articles for the Members Corner, a regular column in *Surveyors Times* for members to share their views on current topics and future trends, implications of new technologies and recent court decisions, the sharing of lessons learnt in members' professional practices, the highlights of new practice notes, the introduction of practical apps and ideas gained during members' recent gatherings with fellow professionals, good-natured and industry-related humour, etc.

An article need not be restricted to the professional practice of a surveyor, but neither is it intended to express a member's views on everything. It should connect or have implications for fellow members, be they serious thoughts on the constitution or future of the profession or simply as a gadget or trick that can benefit the day-to-day practices of surveyors. Articles should not be political or directly related to one's personal benefit for fear of litigation from individuals or organisations. The sensitivity and security of information presented also need to be borne in mind.

House rules:

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