The Visible and Invisible Face of Estate Services – Graduation Fortnight

Once again, the annual July graduation ceremonies have passed by and as usual were a resounding success.

Estate Services have had no small part to play in the successful ceremonies which involve, in total around five thousand of our students within the University. Our staff become involved at all stages of the event, sometimes in the forefront and at other times in the background.

The whole process begins with a spring clean of the main areas of the campus between the Parkinson Building and the Great Hall. A lick of paint is applied, pavements are cleaned and levelled and beautiful displays of flowers are planted in beds and containers, to show off campus at its best to our visitors.

Then comes the analysis of the hall itself, confirming for instance that the staircase carpet is fastened down and that all lighting is in full working order.

Nearer the time the Great Hall stage and seating are arranged in preparation, rooms in Parkinson are laid out ready for the Ede & Ravenscroft Gown supply, and signs are made to direct the public.

The Parkinson Court is prepared with all of the relevant stalls for ticket collection, photograph ordering etc. It is at this time that all the gowns are delivered and require transporting to the basement rooms in the Parkinson Building. A team of Cleaning Services personnel then ensure that all final preparations are made both in this building and the Great Hall.

Now we come to the ceremonies themselves, 45 of them over two weeks taking place in a well-oiled clockwork fashion. Again representatives of Estate Services are on hand in all areas, sometimes seen, sometimes not. All have an equally important part to play. Security staff control the building entrances and exits; Facilities Assistants direct guests to their seats and steward the ceremonies; a maintenance team is on standby in case of emergency equipment failure and a team of cleaners swoop in between the ceremonies to get everything spic and span for the next one.

Once the dust settles and the ceremonies are over, planning then starts in preparation for winter degrees in December.

Thank you to all of the staff who dedicate so much effort into ensuring that the degree ceremonies are so well delivered and successful.
Michael Howroyd, staff member of the Handy Gang has been at the forefront of furniture management within Estates for the last four years. As part of his role he would often collect unwanted furniture and take it to the skips, to be broken up and recycled or sent to landfill. In the past, the good quality furniture was stored for reuse in an on-campus store room. However, since the removal of this storage area, all furniture waste has been disposed of, regardless of its condition. In 2008, this amounted to over 90 tonnes of waste, just from the Estate Services collections. This was a most disappointing task for the Handy Gang, who often saw good furniture go to waste, when it could have been reused elsewhere on campus.

The main aim of the Furniture Project is to: Reduce the amount of furniture we buy; Reuse as much as possible; Recycle unwanted furniture as responsibly as possible.

If you have comments you would like to raise or recommendations you would like to make about the new furniture reuse system, Michael has set up a Furniture Blog Forum: https://elgg.leeds.ac.uk/furniture/weblog/

As a result of this the Furniture Project was initiated, which is headed by Michael in conjunction with the Sustainability team. Michael spent the first 3 months of his secondment looking at furniture wastage on campus and what it costs the university. He has since written a report with recommendations to reduce the amount of wastage and therefore limit the cost of furniture to the university, both financially and to the environment. As a direct result of this report, Michael’s secondment was extended for a further six months so that he is now able to develop some of the recommendations further.

One of the initiatives Michael has developed to date is the furniture reuse network: http://lists.leeds.ac.uk/mailman/listinfo/furniture-reuse

This network currently has 52 members and is growing daily. It works for people wanting to register unwanted furniture, as well as for people wishing to obtain furniture for use on campus. You should sign up to the list, which will give you the opportunity to obtain furniture for your office, without having to pay the cost of buying it brand new from a supplier. It is also much quicker to obtain than the usual wait you have when ordering new furniture. Although the new network is quite basic, you will be amazed at the quality of furniture available, so sign up today and take a look.

Michael is also working on several other initiatives, including the university’s ‘construction commitment’. The University of Leeds was the second University in the country to sign up to this agreement, which aims to ensure that we will halve our construction waste by 2012. Michael is now the university’s key liaison with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme). As part of this role he is responsible for transferring the data gathered from all university contractors into an online portal, which monitors and compares our performance against all other organisations signed up to this commitment.

Another initiative Michael is working on is what we do with unwanted or surplus furniture. He is in contact with various external companies who are able to reuse the furniture by distributing it to charities or other similar associations.

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A Year in the Life of…

Maintenance and Operations
It has certainly been a busy year for the Maintenance and Operations team. One of the main achievements was the successful management of the Backlog Maintenance Programme.

Capita Symonds Ltd also played a key part in the operation this year, undertaking a comprehensive review of the university’s Academic Buildings Portfolio. As a result of the review we now have a database containing information about the condition of the estate’s buildings and associated services elements. This will be invaluable in future plans for the development and maintenance of the campus buildings.

Capita Symonds Ltd also undertook a full DDA Access Audit of all buildings, which details our statutory obligations with regards to improving access for staff, students and visitors.

Finance and Procurement

August 08 – October 08 (1st Quarter) – Estates
Finance successfully completed the 07/08 year end and finalised the budget allocations for 08/09. Estates Procurement let the contract for the ‘Supply and Installation of Campus Wayfinding & Signage’. Estates Finance were involved in revising the University’s Financial Procedures in relation to the use of University premises.

November 08 – January 09 (2nd Quarter) – the Estates Finance and Procurement web pages were updated with the help of the Estates IT team: www.leeds.ac.uk/estate_services/finance.

University plans to achieve a 5% efficiency saving across all Services were revealed and subsequent meetings were held with Managers to establish how these savings were going to be achieved.

Microsoft Office is Changing…

In Estate Services we are currently using Microsoft Office 2003, but recently the university has been managing the roll out of the 2007 version in schools and faculties. In line with this, the Estate’s IT team have been developing a program upgrade and will soon manage the transition for all of our users.

As part of the transition process all users will be invited to attend a “roadshow session”, which will demonstrate the key changes and give guidance on how to use the upgraded application. The roadshows have been developed to assist users in order to keep any disruption to a minimum, so please ensure that you do attend when invited to do so. Even if you are an experienced MS Office user it is still imperative that you attend.

The roadshow session will last approximately one hour and include a presentation and demonstration of the Office 2007 application, as well as details about the Quick Reference Guide. A member of the ISS team and a member of the Estates IT team will be on hand to answer any queries. Details of dates will be announced soon.

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Useful Information:

By visiting the ISS website, you will find useful links to information and materials to support MS Office 2007. We advise users to view this to familiarise themselves with the Office 2007 applications. Follow the link: http://iss.leeds.ac.uk/office

For further information please contact Mansoor Butt, Estate Services IT Manager on 0113 343 5934 or email: m.m.buttt@leeds.ac.uk
Who we are & what we do…

Paul Fenwick – Lead CDM Co-ordinator
Paul has recently been appointed as Lead CDM Co-ordinator to ensure the highest standards of design and construction are met to support our Capital Development Programme. He will ensure that we meet the HSE’s expectations under the ‘Fit3 Strategic Programme’. ‘Fit for work, Fit for life, Fit for tomorrow’. This focuses on an organisation’s ability to bring about changes in behaviour to achieve challenging injury and ill-health targets assigned under the Revitalising Health and Safety Agenda.

For the next three years parts of the University will resemble a large building site and there is evidence of construction activity around almost every corner, with hoarding, scaffolding, goods hoists, skips, storage containers and hi-visibility clothing apparent. Paul’s primary objective is to ensure that a safe and enjoyable learning environment is maintained for students and staff.

He will be liaising with faculties and services, ensuring that the disruption to the University’s continued operation and research programmes is minimised, whilst at the same time managing individual expectations.

Heather McLaughlin – Customer Service Clerk
Heather has worked in the Estate Services Helpdesk team for the past five years, but has recently moved into a new role known locally as the ‘Job Tracker’.

The Estates Helpdesk take approximately 5000 work requests for jobs to be undertaken monthly, so the team are extremely busy, booking, processing and billing hours and stock to jobs. Little time is left to get back to customers with an update on how their job request is progressing, or to gain valuable feedback on how we delivered the service they requested. This is why we have now introduced the role of the ‘Job Tracker’.

Heather runs daily reports to assess how we are doing against our SLA deadlines. She then liaises with contractors and internal service providers to get the most up to date information possible on job status. Once this information has been received Heather contacts customers, where possible, and gives them an update. When the job is complete she requests feedback and this is then used by our service to continually assess how we are doing and to constantly improve. Obviously Heather is not able to capture every job, but her efforts are already making a huge impact to our service.

We are now able to provide quarterly customer service reports to our Maintenance and Operations section, so that they can assess their level of service and act upon comments made by our customers. Our contractors are also now more on the ball as they have to provide regular service updates to Heather, so that she can provide customer feedback.

Health and Safety Update…

As you will be aware Estate Services is undergoing a process of change in its safety culture. But, I hear you say, where is this happening? Nothing’s changed where I work? Well, this may well be true. However, be assured, slowly but surely the safety culture is changing and a significant amount of time and resources have been put into improving our attitude to safety. Change of this type can be a slow process.

So what are we actually doing about it?
We have asked external experts in this field to assess our safety culture and produce a report on their findings, as a result of these finding the following has been implemented:

- Senior management have formed a steering group which has set out a clear strategy to improve our safety culture
- Two day safety leadership and ownership courses have been completed by 90 staff from Supervisor/Team Leader to Director
- Supply chain management group (contractor management) is being formed which includes representatives from Faculties and Unions – draft Terms of Reference have been drawn up
- A communication group is being set up to look at ways of creating ‘positive’ communication within Estates and with our customers. It is envisaged that this group will consist of staff from all levels of our organisation
- All attendees to the leadership and ownership courses have set out ‘Time for Safety’ commitments that set out their actions for visible leadership. These commitments will be monitored and discussed at each safety committee to ensure continued improvement
- Directors/Managers have started undertaking safety tours – these are carried out with their staff
- Managers have started weekly team meeting (short sessions) to discuss working practices/procedures and to discuss planned non-routine activities requiring more focus

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