



The 32nd Meeting of the Department of Computer Science and Technology Buildings and Environment Committee

14.00-15.00, Monday, 17 March 2025 Room FW11

Minutes

Present:

Prof Richard Mortier, Chair Sarah Bainsfair (Observer) Celia Burns, Secretary Tom Bytheway Dr Andrew Caines Ali Digby Gabrielle Gaudeau Dr Markus Kuhn Dr Ian Lewis Daniel Porter Malcolm Scott

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Piete Brooks, Martin McDonnell, and Caroline Stewart.

2. Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2025.

3. Matters Arising

Richard noted that he would be adding some items under Any Other Business.

4. Committee Membership

The Committee noted that the Buildings Services Manager, Ali Digby, will be leaving on 9 May 2025 to take up the position of Property, Estates and Safety Manager at Madingley Hall. The job advertisement for her current role closes on 19 March, with interviews planned in early April. On behalf of the Committee, Richard expressed thanks to Ali for all the work she has done since she has been with the Department, including getting many things fixed some of which had been broken for a very long time.

5. Reducing Energy Consumption

(a) Building System Upgrade (BMS) *

Ali is still waiting for engineers to carry out the remaining repair.

(b) LED upgrade *

The lighting upgrade, which began on 9 December 2024, is ongoing. Feedback about the project was addressed under item 9(e), Any Other Business.

(c) Recording energy use and solar panel contributions

Andrew had enquired about access to usage data. All reported that she had wanted the whole building to have access to the data; however, the data is accessible only via account (currently with access provided to the Head of Department, Ian and Ali). All didn't know if the number of accounts was limited but agreed to look into getting additional accounts for use by Malcolm and Markus.

6. Building Matters

a) Department Café *

Caffiend had indicated an interest in providing a cafeteria service for the Department and Procurement was considering whether a tender process is required. There had been no further progress on this and as Ali will be leaving soon, this has been designated a non-priority for now.

b) Verex security system

A new security system is required to replace the current at-risk Verex system. Ian reported that there had been a useful meeting between the Department, Estates and UIS which had provided some understanding about the different components of this issue. The Committee discussed this issue, including where the financial cost for the pilot project should lie (with the University since it will be to the University's advantage) and noting that if UIS is not going to pay for the pilot, there is no incentive or benefit to the Department for agreeing to do it. It was noted that there was a balance between this being a University issue and the Department being able to have a say in what the University might provide.

It was agreed that Daniel would obtain updates on the quotes from the original proof of concept so that Richard could provide them to the Head of Department for discussion with Estates about this issue.

Action: Daniel and Richard

c) Building management system (BMS; cooling and heating) *

- i) Heating problems. A document outlining the background to the heating problems and possible mitigations was circulated to Departmental staff on 8 May 2024 (BEC-2024-07-5f).
- **ii) Sludge in the system.** At the time of the last meeting, a new issue—sludge in the system, thought to be dirt from construction of the building—was affecting the system flow. Ali had raised a ticket for this issue and subsequently chased Estates, but she has still not received a response.
- **iii)** Building thermometers. Estates have now raised the set point temperatures to be higher than the University average (19 degrees) to account for the variability in temperature related to electric heaters being used in offices with a thermometer.

d) Re-fit of the WGB Library

The Library refit could qualify for funding available for supporting developing education spaces. Ian reported that the production of an overall estimated cost for consideration by the Head of Department and submission for funding is in progress.

Action: lan

e) Downpipe Leaks *

This is a siphonic drainage issue and work is in progress. The works are currently out to tender (closing on 21 March 2025).

f) Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) *

Arrangements for the general testing of the building are ongoing.

g) The Hardware Lab—Relocation of the Workshop to the Bin Store

The Head of Department had asked whether there are other spaces on the West Cambridge site where we could collaborate on this issue. Thomas reported that he has been gathering information about this and there are some options, but they might turn out to come with costs (e.g. they may require payment for services or be located too far away on the West Cambridge site). Thomas will bring his findings to the next meeting.

Action: Thomas

h) Pool Table *

Ali was sourcing a supplier to re-cover the pool table. However, when the table was moved recently during the lighting project, three of the four feet fell off. The recommendation is to replace the table; however, there is sensitivity around this because the table was purchased with a donation. Richard agreed to talk to the Head of Department about this issue.

Action: Richard

i) Meeting Pods *

The three additional meeting pods have been installed but we are awaiting the correct tables (the pods arrived with the wrong colour tables). Ian reported that the original fans were noisy, and the build-up of CO^2 was due to the fans not being used, but the new fans are quieter. Once the correct tables have been installed, Ian will install some CO^2 sensors.

Action: lan

j) Use of the Garden on the South Side of the Building *

This project—to make use of the fenced-off garden on the south side of the building as a quiet place by installing a gate in the fence—is in progress.

k) Hybrid meeting rooms

A UIS-recommended kit is to be installed in GS15. Daniel reported that we are awaiting power sockets for the additional power. All has chased Estates on this but has not had a response.

7. Out-of-Hours Use of Rooms on the Public Side of the Building *

There are two components to this issue:

- (i) the need for a policy documenting the responsibilities of the academic event hosts and sponsors (including a risk assessment) for out-of-hours events; and
- (ii) the need for, and difficulty in finding, the academic hosts.

Richard reported that he has not yet had the opportunity to write the policy document. Ali reported that Building Services have been approving RAs as event hosts for various out-of-hours events but highlighted that these were not large events.

8. Student Feedback

Gabrielle, PhD Student Rep, reported that she had received feedback from a student about the lighting refit. This was discussed under item 9(e), Any Other Business.

9. Any Other Business

(a) Waste bins in the kitchens

Richard had received a request for non-food waste bins in the kitchens. Ali reported that the University is changing the process for waste collection again in response to new UK Government legislation which from 31 March 2025 requires waste to be sorted into four separate bins: for non-recycling, paper and cardboard, mixed recycling (including glass, metal and plastic), and food waste.

To make the system work and to prevent contamination of the food waste bins, all bins (including food waste) will need to be located together. Since all four bins cannot fit into most kitchens, they will all be located outside (but within 2m of) the kitchens.

(b) Car park usage

The increased use of the car park adjacent to the William Gates Building was raised as well as the way people are parking there. It was noted that the department does not have jurisdiction over the car park; in fact, anyone working on the West Cambridge site can park there (including people working in the new Engineering building opposite). In addition, the studs delineating the parking spaces are not very visible. One suggestion was to communicate with the few people who routinely park badly. Another suggestion was for parking spaces to be painted in (but this is not viable on the shingle-type surface), and a further suggestion was for the studs to be painted. Ali noted that she could raise this issue with Estates but thought that Estates would not want to address this until the works to the Whittle Building next door are complete.

(c) Bike parking

Richard had received a request for the 8 bike racks in the diagonal line from the student entrance to the pedestrian crossing over to the West Hub to be removed to allow for a direct walkway from the door to the pedestrian crossing. The Committee did not support this request.

(d) Quiet space

Richard had received a comment about there being a lack of quiet space for on-site visitors and for PhD students in shared offices since the closure of the library. The MPhil Lab and the Intel Lab were noted as potential quiet spaces.

(e) Lighting refit

New lighting in the public spaces seems to be working well. Lecture Theatre 2 and most of the offices have been completed and Lecture Theatre 1 is scheduled to be completed by the end of the Easter vacation. However, quite a lot of negative feedback has been received about the new office lighting. It was noted that if the works were to pause now, it might be 3 or 4 months before the contractors could come back to resume revised works. In addition, any resolution should be building-wide, not a series of separate hacks.

Specific issues included:

Lack of in-office switches resulting in a lack of control. Switches will be provided in all meeting rooms, and we are investigating whether we can also provide them in all offices. Markus noted that there are two ways of implementing light switches and presented some options in the meeting. Further information is provided in the Appendix (attached). However, we need to avoid deploying a set of unofficial "hacks" around the building to control lights else Estates will be unaware and we may come into conflict with their activities. It will be much more sustainable long-term to find an officially supported solution.

Lack of consistency in behaviour (light levels, on/off). The commissioning process has now completed so lights should now be ganged together for more consistent control, though ambient light sensors remain individual to the light to which they are attached.

Use of lighting to monitor occupancy levels. Once commissioning is completed, the dashboard will be controlled by Thorlux and Estates, with the Building Services Manager also having a view of the dashboard. There is no intent to "monitor occupancy" – the data reported is simply when the lights are turned on/off by the PIR sensor, to enable maintenance to be carried out in a timely fashion. For single occupancy offices, the University's Data Controller will be consulted.

Disruption including the time until commissioning completed, not just during the physical *installation*. The works in our building are the first where commissioning has been done on a rolling basis; for other buildings, commissioning did not occur until completion of the project. However, it was noted that the communication about the project needed to include that time until commissioning completed, and this will be fed back to Estates.

Quality of the new lights. This included the brightness and lack of diffusion, causing discomfort (headaches and migraines) for some people; and the angle and positioning (causing glare and reflection on laptop screens when used flat on a desk). Laptop stands, available from Stores, were suggested as an easy solution for the glare by changing the angle of the screen to be more vertical.

Communication around the project. This included communication about the project itself, when the project would happen, why the change was needed and how long it would take. It was noted that disruption extended beyond simply a couple of hours when the contractor was in a particular office to a week or two. With regard to complaints about people not having had the opportunity to provide input before the project commenced, Ali noted that the Lecture Theatre lighting had been flagged to her three years ago as a priority as it was in danger of failing. As part of pushing that, she became aware of LED upgrades going on across the estate and, as a way of getting the Lecture Theatre lighting replaced, she asked for our building to get on the LED upgrades schedule. Ali facilitated surveys of the building by the contractors, but the information had been fed back to Estates. In short, the project was out of the department's control.

It was also noted that there had been at least one very unfortunate interaction between members of the Department and one of the lead contractors where he was harangued about aspects of the refit wholly outside his control. This was highly inappropriate – not only was it simply rude and not behaviour expected of members of the Department, he

was not the appropriate person to deal with such issues, so it was also entirely ineffective.

Richard agreed to address the student's complaints provided by Gabrielle so that she could respond to the student directly, and to circulate a department-wide communication about the project. Feedback will also be provided to Estates.

Action: Richard

10. Date of Next Meetings

Future meetings are scheduled as follows

- Monday, 12 May 2025, 14.00 15.00, in FW11
- Friday, 13 June 2025, 10.00 11.00, in SC04

See next page for the Appendix on Lighting

Appendix: Lighting (provided by Dr Markus Kuhn)

To help with minuting, here a slightly polished version of what I reported about office lights and switches:

MGK reported that many occupants had complained to him, some quite bitterly, about the removal of their light switch following the installation of new *Thorlux Light Line* ceiling fittings in their GE-corridor offices last week. Some were also concerned about the high luminous intensity from the LEDs causing them discomfort and had sent him photos to illustrate some of their concerns with laptop screen glare, webcam interference, and loss of control (e.g. a BBC cameraman resorting to bin bags):



MGK had investigated the technical options and reported that these "SmartScan" lights can be software-configured in one of two ways, which the manufacturer calls "Platform 1" and "Platform 2":

 In "Platform 2" mode, the light fittings join a building-wide radio-mesh network to communicate daily, via mobile-IP gateways, with a Thorlux-operated cloud website. Light fittings configured as "Platform 2" should remain powered up continuously, as the cloud website would otherwise report a loss of mains power as a fault.

"Platform 2" was originally mainly intended for emergency lights, to automate their legally required regular retesting, but is now also marketed for general use, e.g. to collect room-occupancy data.

• In "Platform 1" mode, the lights are not linked to any cloud website and therefore do not have to be powered up continuously. In this mode, they could be powered down by occupants via the existing wired light switches. The lights can still be grouped together locally via radio, such that they switch together based on shared motion-detection signals. And they can still be configured locally via an infrared programmer.

The energy consumption is lower in "Platform 1" mode.

There are mainly two options to restore control by users:

(a) Configure the Thorlux Light Line ceiling lights in offices as "Platform 1" devices and leave the existing wired light-switches in place, such that users can power down the lights, as before.

Purchase one "SmartScan Programmer" device (£429 + VAT) for the department, such that we can locally adjust the various brightness and timeout parameters of these lights ourselves, according to user's preference.

(b) Continue to configure the ceiling lights for "Platform 2", but replace the existing wired light switch with a battery-powered "SmartScan Dim" switch in offices, and a "SmartScan Scene" switch in meeting rooms. These cost about £105+VAT each.

MGK recommended to proceed with option (a) for office lights, because it is cheaper and simpler, and option (b) for meeting rooms, because there dimming and scene control via radio switch are useful for presentations.

Option (a) does not incur any additional cost (beyond buying one programmer). In fact, it saves the installers one step: removing the existing wired switches.

Option (b) costs £105+VAT for each room and will cause future maintenance work because batteries will eventually have to be replaced in the radio switches.

(All other "SmartScan" lights, in corridors and other communal spaces, would remain unaffected by this, and stay on "Platform 2". The new lecture-theatre lights would also not be affected, as they use an entirely different, wired control system: DALI.)