



**The 36th Meeting of the Department of Computer Science and Technology
Buildings and Environment Committee**

**14.00 – 15.00, Thursday, 29 January 2026
Room GS15**

Minutes

In attendance:

Dr Ian Lewis, Chair	Dr Tobias Grosser
Sarah Bainsfair (Observer)	Dr Markus Kuhn
Dr Piete Brooks	Martin McDonnell
Celia Burns, Secretary	Daniel Porter
Thomas Bytheway	Malcolm Scott
Professor Andrew Caines	Caroline Stewart
Diana Gauvrit	

1. Committee Membership

Jamie Cao has joined the Committee as the new Postgraduate Student Representative.

2. Conflicts of Interest

Committee members were asked to make any declarations of interest at the relevant agenda item.

3. Apologies for Absence

Jamie Cao sent his apologies.

4. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 16 October 2025 were approved.

5. Reducing Energy Consumption

(a) LED upgrade: leftover funds

Due to complaints about the new lighting last year, a survey had been commissioned, and Estates had paused any further work. Diana confirmed that there had been no progress since the previous meeting. It was agreed that she would continue to follow up with Estates. This item will be starred on future agendas unless there is a substantive update to report.

(b) Recording energy use and solar panel contributions

Diana reported that access to the energy usage system had now been arranged: she had been added as an owner so can manage user access as needed.

The Committee discussed how energy usage data might be reported. Ian suggested that, once available, the information could feed into periodic reporting, such as the Department's annual report. Diana noted that such data would also be useful when seeking funding for future heating system upgrades.

Malcolm proposed that the solar panel performance should be publicised, particularly as the building is fully solar-powered during the summer months. He suggested involving the Communications Manager in this. Thomas highlighted the possibility of drawing on expertise in smart infrastructure and smart buildings to support this work. It was acknowledged that this year's figures may appear worse than last year due to the increased use of heaters. Ian will follow up on next steps.

Action: Ian

6. Building Matters

a) Verex security system

Daniel reported that he had not yet met with Abraham Martin (UIS) and that UIS are unlikely to be closely involved in the pilot. John Chater, Head of IT & Digital Transformation for the School of Technology, is liaising with Materials Science, who are installing a new system, to understand their approach.

Diana reported that Estates agreed a site visit is needed to assess requirements. She noted concerns about a Chubb quote that appeared unusually low and said progress continues to be delayed by Estates. Although no firm timeline could be given, she estimated that a plan might be possible by the end of the year.

Markus asked whether previous vendors from the earlier UIS project had been reapproached; Daniel confirmed that this had already been explored and that the main obstacle is UIS's reluctance to take on this project.

This item will be starred on future agendas unless there is a substantive update to report.

b) Building management system (BMS; cooling and heating)

Diana reported that, following sustained pressure on Estates, a contractor had now reviewed the system in detail. A four-day inspection had produced a long list of issues, and further flushing of the system was scheduled for next week. She noted, however, that flushing had already been carried out three times, each time producing brown water, and that the underlying blockage must be resolved before any improvement can be expected.

Markus explained that each of the three air handling units has coils serving each floor, and there is currently no water flow through the ground and first floor south coils. These coils will need to be individually flushed and inspected until normal flow is restored. He added that this issue accounts for low temperatures experienced in some of the offices.

Diana noted that even once blockages are cleared, the heating system remains poorly suited to the current building layout, and improvements will be limited.

The Committee also discussed the very low temperatures some offices had reached this winter and the ongoing difficulty in securing Estates' engagement. It was agreed that evidence of temperatures and system performance should be collated, supported by Ian, Markus, and Diana, to strengthen the case ahead of next winter. Caroline reported that a new Estates Business Partner (Jane Webster) had been appointed, dedicated to working

with the School of Technology departments. Caroline hoped this may improve communications between departments and Estates and suggested it would be good to invite Jane to the next meeting.

Diana noted that attempts to involve the Safety Office had not been successful. The Committee agreed to provide departmental support, including escalation via the Head of Department, if necessary, to ensure that Estates address the issues.

Markus asked whether it would be possible to obtain access rights to the BMS to assist with testing. Diana reported that Estates had been reluctant to provide such access.

c) Re-fit of the WGB Library

Diana confirmed that she and Tobias had met after the previous meeting, but she had paused work on a proposal due to the number of competing ideas for the space.

The Committee discussed the need to clarify whether the room should serve as a teaching space (this had been the original idea but may not still be the case). Prof Mateja Jamnik, former Director of PG Education and Prof Rob Harle, current Director of UG Education, were identified as colleagues who should be consulted. Once requirements are clear, a proposal can be developed and considered by the Committee.

Caroline suggested that alternative options— such as a social or researcher focused space—should also be explored. Andrew noted that the Research Staff Forum had recently discussed this but felt the library may not be the most suitable social space.

Diana reported that attempts to secure Estates funding or funding for shared teaching had been unsuccessful.

It was agreed that once there is clarification about whether the space is needed for teaching, proposals can be considered to determine the most appropriate use of the currently unused space. Ian to follow up.

Action: Ian

d) Downpipe Leaks and Roof Repairs

Diana reported that patching work on the roof membrane has been carried out, with over 80 holes identified and repaired. Although some leaking continues, the situation has improved. However, Diana expressed concern about the slow pace of the wider roof replacement project, which is scheduled to begin in the spring and be completed by July 2026. No plan or timeline has yet been received from Estates, and she remains doubtful that the project will meet the stated deadline. Caroline added that she has also fed back concerns to Hannah Juma, School of Technology Change Partner.

e) Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)

Diana noted that it has been difficult to secure a contractor to carry out PAT testing for the building. The University Safety Office has offered to undertake the testing (free of charge), although this would consist of visual inspections only rather than full electrical testing. She has requested that the whole building be completed by June 2027 but has not yet had a response.

Diana emphasised that although there is no legally mandated interval for PAT testing, the Department's insurance requires annual checks. While a two-year interval may be tolerated, the building is currently overdue. Piete asked whether a visual inspection alone would be sufficient; Thomas confirmed that it would constitute a valid PAT test in legal terms.

As Diana is moving this forward, this item can be closed and will not appear on future agendas.

f) The Hardware Lab—Relocation of the Workshop

Thomas presented a document outlining latest proposals for relocation of the workshop part of the Hardware Lab. The Committee discussed the proposals (which included a refit of the Library for the workshop and a datacentre, a repurposing of Stores, conversion of the GC22 meeting room, and use of space in the Roger Needham building). It was agreed that it would be useful to have a separate meeting to discuss the proposals.

g) Meeting Pods

Ian noted that, from a CO₂ perspective, the meeting pods were performing well and had met a need that had not previously been fully recognised. The Committee briefly discussed their use and placement, and it was noted that some pods are currently occupying areas that could otherwise serve as collaborative space. The Committee considered the possibility of relocating some pods into corridors, but noted several constraints, including legal requirements for corridor width, maintaining clear lines of sight, and the practical difficulty of moving the units (although an external company could be engaged to assist). The potential introduction of a booking system was also mentioned. The Committee agreed that this item is now closed and will not appear on future agendas.

h) Use of the South Garden as a Quiet Place

Options considered by the Committee were opening the garden to the wider University community (which would involve meeting specific requirements and incurring associated costs), leaving the space as it is, and installing a gate on the east side to allow access solely for landscaping purposes. Ian reported that he had not yet spoken with the Head of Department to explore this matter further.

Action: Ian

i) Chiller

Diana reported that two suppliers had identified different repair needs, so Diana is proceeding with both.

j) Automatic Doors

Diana reported that she had received a quote for the installation of automatic door mechanisms for the central doors on each floor, the main door to the public toilet, and the door to the disabled toilet. The quote was approximately £20k, excluding the cost of card-reading functionality. As this was significantly higher than anticipated and her own budget had already been fully allocated, she has consulted with the Head of Department. This item will be starred on future agendas unless there is a substantive update to report.

k) Lack of discussion space on the second floor

Diana is continuing to pursue this with the second-floor occupants.

l) Teaching wall surfaces

Diana reported that a new whiteboard has been installed in FW26 and that she is awaiting feedback from one further user. The cleaning team has agreed to clean the board on Monday mornings. This installation will serve as a pilot; if it is positively received, the Department will consider upgrading the wall surfaces in other teaching rooms.

m) Office temperatures

The situation remains the same, with no solution in sight. Anyone who wants an individual heater should request one from Stores. Markus advised that we need to remain aware of the 40-amp current limit on the busbars (power rails), and users should, therefore, use the lowest power setting. This item can now be closed and will not appear on future agendas.

n) Car parking

Diana reported that she had received no further information since the Travel Team had paused the use of the Wayleadr car parking space booking system on 8 October 2026. This item will be starred on future agendas unless there is a substantive update to report.

o) Gender-neutral toilets

Diana reported that she had submitted a minor works request in October for the installation of three sets of gender-neutral toilets in the building, but no progress has been made to date. She continues to follow this up, with support from the Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC). Estates have indicated that they are awaiting further government guidance before proceeding.

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

Internal events

Diana has updated information on the intranet relating to responsibilities of academic hosts and sponsors for out-of-hours events. The Committee agreed that this item is now closed and will not appear on future agendas.

External events

The Committee discussed out-of-hours use of departmental space by student societies and other external parties. Caroline reported that she had discussed the issue with the Head of Department team. The Department does not currently have sufficient routine support available for out-of-hours events, and viability is therefore dependent on the availability and willingness of the Buildings Coordinator (Martin) to provide overtime cover. Caroline noted that the emerging policy is likely to reflect this requirement. The Committee agreed that this item is now closed and will not appear on future agendas.

8. Student Feedback

Jamie, Postgraduate Student Rep, was not in attendance. There was nothing to report.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Gender-neutral toilets were discussed above (item 6o).

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Dates for the next meetings are as follows. All meetings will take place as hybrid meetings located in GS15 from 14.00 – 15.00.

- Thursday, 26 March 2026
- Thursday, 14 May 2026
- Thursday, 25 June 2026