

# 165



WILLMOTT DIXON  
SINCE 1852

Autumn 2017

For everyone at Willmott Dixon's  
family of companies

MEET THE PEOPLE TRAINING  
HARD, CUTTING CARBON  
AND KEEPING US AS THE UK'S  
NUMBER-ONE CONTRACTOR



Westward Ho! A stunning new  
secondary school in Cardiff is just the  
start of our growth plans **P10**

Called to order: How we are  
transforming Whitehall in three  
complex interiors jobs **P16**

# 15 NEWS

## UK'S NUMBER ONE

Willmott Dixon was crowned 'Best Main Contractor to Work for' at the Construction Enquirer Awards, for the second year running!

Our company secured more votes than any other to achieve the title, with more than 1,000 people choosing us in the 'Over £250m' turnover category. The awards are unique in that companies with the most votes win, so it was fantastic that we gained so many votes from staff and supply chain members.

It's another accolade after we were the highest placed contractor in this year's Sunday Times Top 100 Best Companies to Work For list, coming 14th.

Rick Willmott said: "I want to thank everyone for voting for us at the Construction Enquirer Awards to help our company again stand out. It's a great achievement we should all be proud about."

TV architect George Clarke presented the award. It was a shame that the whole company

**"I want to thank everyone for voting for us at the Construction Enquirer Awards to help our company again stand out."**  
Rick Willmott

couldn't be present to collect the trophy as it is everyone's accolade.

One person who was there on the night, graphic designer Kayleigh Laing, said: "It was a brilliant feat - the whole table was buzzing after we saw off stiff competition from bigger companies to win."



Our team had front-row seats as all award winners joined George Clarke on stage for a photocall.

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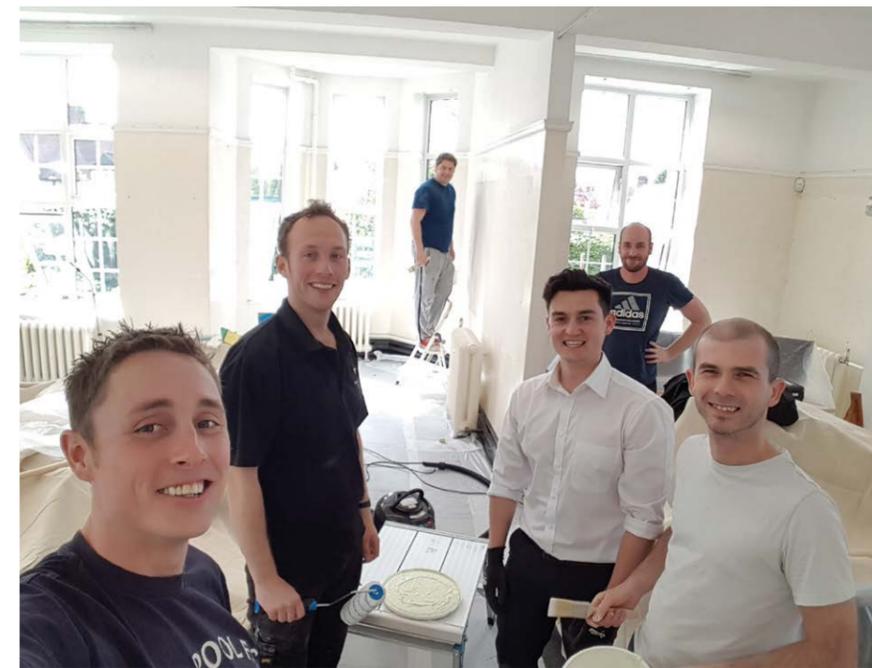
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## TIME TO HELP



Our people spent nearly 56,000 hours last year improving the lives of others. This record-breaking figure means that more than one per cent of our people's time is now devoted to the wellbeing of their communities.

It's one highlight in a raft of achievements that is helping us stand out from our peers in our approach to providing social value. From mentoring school pupils to improving community facilities and working with disadvantaged people to get them into jobs, nearly 75 per cent of our people now get involved in some form of activity that has a positive impact on another person's life chance.

Other examples of making a difference include mentoring 630 young people to help them find jobs, carrying out 775 mock interviews held in schools, providing 889 work experience placements and delivering 378 community projects.

New head of the Willmott Dixon Foundation Sarah Fraser explains: "We should all be proud of our work to strengthen society beyond the buildings we create. Feedback in the 'Your Say' survey says that one thing our people like about working for us is the opportunity to make an impact in their communities, and the examples we are seeing are truly inspiring."

**Above:** Volunteering activities like that of our Hitchin team, who spruced up Hillshott Infant School in Letchworth, are enriching the lives of thousands.

## BIGGER AND CARDIFF BAY-TER!

The Wales and the West team are underlining their growth plans across South Wales by relocating to bigger and better offices in nearby Cardiff Bay.

Planning for the future, MD Neal Stephens has chosen to take a 10-year lease at offices on the Celtic Gateway Business Park to give his team a brighter office space. Neal explained: "Our office in Cathedral Road served us well for many decades but the building was getting a little dated and we just needed more room to grow."

He added: "This is an exciting new chapter for us and we look forward to welcoming colleagues from around the business to our new Cardiff home."



Wales and the West MD Neal Stephens is plotting growth by moving to Cardiff Bay.

# 15 NEWS

## LEARNING CURVE

By 2025, 750,000 extra school places are needed in England; Fran Cox has just joined Sunesis from a local authority and explains how she's helping councils build the 'beautiful school buildings they need'

"A lot of the time you are so overwhelmed by what you need to deliver, you can't see the wood for the trees," says Fran Cox, explaining what it is like to work in local government.

The new operations director at Sunesis, our joint venture with Scape, knows this from experience.

Until August, she was head of school infrastructure and partnerships at Bedford Borough Council and a client of Sunesis (see box, right).

"Within local authorities, there's more to do, but fewer people to do it," recalls Fran. "It's hugely stressful for those tasked with delivery. I feel like I want to help them." In her new role, that's exactly what she'll be doing.

Last year the Department for Education forecast that 750,000 extra school places would be needed in England by 2025. Sunesis aims to be part of the solution. Since 2011, it has created more than 18,000 new school places by providing a range of pre-designed primary schools, as well as 'Connect' school extensions.

It now plans to deliver another 7,500 school places by 2020.

"Sunesis provides standardised products that can be replicated and rolled out quickly," explains Fran. Again, she speaks from experience. As a client, Fran was an advocate of the solutions offered by Scape and Sunesis.

In fact, she procured almost 50 Connect school extensions for Bedford Borough Council.

### Fran facts

Fran, 33, is the mother of three daughters aged four, six and nine. "Life is very busy," she laughs. Before joining Sunesis, Fran had only worked in a local authority environment, but says her new colleagues at Sunesis have been "hugely welcoming". "It's been fascinating to see what it is like being a woman in the construction industry. Working for a local authority, you don't tend to see gender."

Having not considered a career in construction when she was at school, Fran is keen for things to be different for her girls. "I want them to understand that they can get a job in this or any other traditionally male-dominated industry," she says.

### Right and opposite:

Fran inside St Andrew's Lower School East, a recent Sunesis project in Biggleswade.



**"I don't want Sunesis to be just another product. I really want to take some of the strain and to improve their wellbeing."**

**Fran Cox, operations director, Sunesis**

"My previous role focused on providing good-quality solutions for children in the borough, and Sunesis delivered really beautiful places in which they could learn."

A qualified psychologist, Fran's first job in education involved supporting children and encouraging them to stay in the system.

Fran's role gradually became more about governance and project management, ensuring schools were doing what they should to comply with the local authority's policies, particularly those providing for children with special educational needs.

Eventually, her job focused on the school environment and

delivering infrastructure projects.

"I know how important it is for us to be able to work quickly and flexibly," says Fran. "Things can change on a day-to-day basis within local authorities. Sunesis is able to build a new classroom within as little as eight weeks with a short lead-in time."

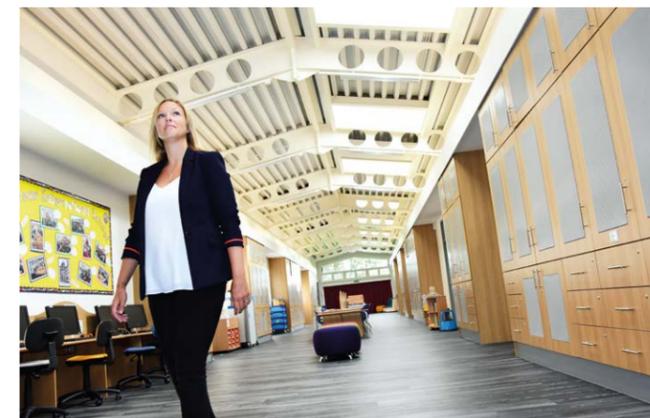
As a client, Fran got to know the Sunesis team based at the Hitchin office. Now she wants to become as familiar across all the LCOs.

"I'm aiming to achieve consistency of delivery across the country," she says.

Fran, who is new to construction, admits that, "sometimes, construction goes over my head".

She often needs to remind herself that she's "surrounded by experts in their field", and that she brings something completely different: in-depth knowledge of procurement and, crucially, what clients want and need.

"I don't want Sunesis to be just another product," Fran concludes. "I really want to take some of the strain and to improve their wellbeing."



## A FAIR COP



An idea that started on a drawing board is set to revolutionise the next generation of custody suites. With police forces centralising operations into larger 'all-in-one' custody suites that allow them to dispose of smaller, inefficient stations, the launch of our new CODE (Custody Options, Designed and Engineered) system has taken the blue-light sector by storm. Months after introducing CODE – a series of three standardised models providing 28, 36 and 40-plus cell facilities – Humberside Police is the first to choose it for their next-generation custodial facility in Grimsby.

It was a big decision for Humberside Police, which initially looked at renovating its existing facility. However, Humberside concluded that it would be too expensive and difficult to facilitate, and CODE would be ideal to replace current custody suites in Scunthorpe and Grimsby.

Senior framework manager Chris Farr explains: "We've seen our innovation with Sunesis capture the imagination of the schools market and are aiming to do the same with the CODE range for blue-light customers. The take-up has been enormous and we expect other forces to follow

**Above:** How the CODE facility in Grimsby for Humberside Police will look.

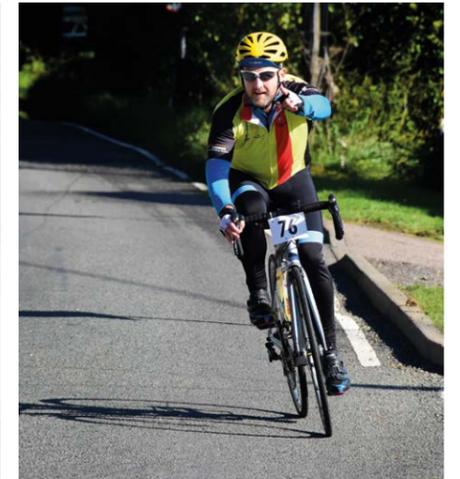
Humberside's lead."

Our team is currently at pre-construction stage, awaiting planning for the 36-cell custody suite, which also comes with 1,000 square metres of office space. Police forces are opting for these suites to save millions of pounds in long-term running costs, and also to create better working environments for detectives and better conditions for those remanded at the facility.

We are market leaders in delivering these types of blue-light facilities, having recently worked with South Yorkshire Police, South Wales Police, West Midlands Police and Lancashire Constabulary.

CODE models are designed in partnership with NORR Architects, the Home Office and more than 20 different police forces to address issues such as minimising the risk of detainee injury, increasing security of evidence and providing a more efficient and sustainable working environment.

Like Sunesis, CODE delivers at a fixed cost, timescale, quality and minimum risk.



More than 170 riders from across our family of companies took part, and wore specially designed yellow and red Willmott Dixon cycling tops. Fortem colleagues wore their distinctive blue branding. Celebrity cyclist Yanto Barker joins in the fun (opposite, bottom).



# CLASSIC SHINES BRIGHTLY

The sun shone on our fundraising riders, who were accompanied by celebrity cyclist Yanto Barker

The sun shone brightly for the second Willmott Dixon Classic charity cycle ride in September.

Our annual ride for Action Medical Research once again attracted more than 170 riders from across the company, as well as customers and suppliers, to tackle a variety of routes from 30 miles up to 90 miles.

Celebrity rider Yanto Barker, renowned for being the best British rider 10 years ago before the era of Wiggins, Hoy and Froome, was on hand to start the ride – and he also completed the 30-mile version of the route.

Each rider was given a uniquely designed Willmott Dixon cycling top featuring a distinctive red

stripe down the side – look out for someone wearing our top on a road near you!

Last year's Classic raised £100,000 for Action Medical Research to support its work saving and improving the lives of children, and there are high hopes that can be matched in 2017.

Like last year, the route started at Royston but this time went east into Cambridgeshire and, for some riders who got lost, also took in Braintree and Chelmsford in Essex!

Everyone returned safely from the day's exertions and enjoyed a barbeque in the afternoon sunshine, where they also shared their experiences and ideas for the route of next year's ride.



# FROM GOOD TO GREAT

Graham Shaw, MD of Interiors, explains how investment in staff underpins his plan to double turnover and establish the business as a national contractor



## Graham Shaw: CV

### Interiors

MD April 2017 – Present  
Deputy MD 2016 – 2017  
Director of Operations 2011 – 2016  
Commercial Director 2009 – 2011

### Construction

Commercial Manager 2003 – 2009  
Senior surveyor 2000 – 2003

### Housing

Assistant surveyor 1996 – 2000  
Management trainee 1993 – 1996

**Outside interests:** Keen runner and 'tough mudder' (long-distance obstacle races through mud).  
Married with two children, aged 12 and 9

**Lives:** Ardingly, West Sussex

Graham Shaw is a man on a mission. The managing director of Interiors (WDI) is drawing up a strategy to double turnover, building on the current wave of success with a string of high-profile projects.

Opening a new regional office is on the agenda, as is a programme of learning and development to get the best out of all their people, harnessing technologies to increase efficiency and changing working practices to attract a more diverse workforce.

"Over the next three to four years we want to become a truly national contractor," says Graham, who is working closely with WDI chief operating officer Mike Hart. "We're mostly London and South

East-centric at the moment, and we expect to expand our offering nationwide over the next few years. We want to be an even more significant contributor to the Group in terms of size and profit."

WDI's turnover is currently around £140m, a significant increase from £30m five years ago. It now employs 210 people.

"We now have the opportunity to tender for any project we target," says Graham. "A few years ago, we would have been seen as a contractor dabbling in the interiors market. We're now seen as a leader in the field with a track record and client list to match."

Graham joined Willmott Dixon as a management trainee in 1993. He moved over to WDI from Cobham to become its commercial director in 2009 and has never looked back, rising through the ranks to become MD in April 2017.

### Portfolio prestige

Prestigious projects in the portfolio currently include the Old Admiralty Building being turned into a new home for the Department for Education, in partnership with Hitchin (see page 17); and 39

## "Over the next three to four years we want to become a truly national contractor"

**Graham Shaw, managing director, Interiors**

Victoria Street fitted out for the Department of Health (see pages 16-19). WDI has also been awarded work at the Twickenham Stadium East Stand to create world-class corporate hospitality facilities. These projects follow hot on the heels of the Design Museum, completed a year ago, for which WDI won numerous plaudits.

"They demonstrate our strength and skills range," says Graham, "from the ability to cope with complex internal reconfiguration and refurbishment, through to delivering high-end finishes on a tight programme, whilst meeting essential internal and customer KPIs." Work comes from all sectors, although hotels, commercial and higher education are key.

Graham wants to take on larger projects and can see more joint working with Construction. The two are in a joint venture on the £75m refurbishment of the Old Admiralty Building, which was awarded via the Scape framework – an approach through which Graham would like more success.

The commercial sector is beginning to slow as caution hits the market and single-stage tendering rears its head once more. Many a contractor has come unstuck taking on complex refurbishment projects, which are prone to unforeseen discoveries once the work begins on site.

But Graham says that part of WDI's skill is dealing with precisely this issue. "With more complex interiors projects it's essential to have a strategy to identify and mitigate risks, and create value through clever thinking for us and the client," he says.

"We're ambitious, but that's tempered with caution and care. We won't be chasing the market down – it's more important to deliver the right profit than grow too quickly." The big ambition,

says Graham, is "to take WDI from being a good business to a great business, where people take personal pride in everything they do". He hopes this will come from taking the business through what's effectively a change management process following the mantra "Everything Completed with Pride".

He explains: "We want people to feel passionate about what they do, and their behaviours support the way we operate. I want to give everyone the opportunity to become their best self and create an environment that fosters a learning culture where people want to develop themselves. A great business is one where everyone is here because they want to be here."

"Given the right opportunity and the right training, people will deliver excellent results, and customers will come back to you."

### 'One-team' approach

Breaking down internal barriers that sometimes exist between departments, pre-construction and operation, for instance, is also part of his plan to nurture a 'one-team' approach. Graham says WDI will be harnessing new technology for training, communications and delivery, through the use of apps and thought-leadership talks.

For project delivery, building information modelling and virtual reality will attract wider take-up if customers buy into it. For example, these technologies were used for the Department of Health offices. There is more scope, too, for offsite prefabrication, especially in relation to services.

The modernisation agenda also includes a drive to attract more women into the business and a younger generation, working closely with schools to promote the business for the future and the introduction of 'agile' or flexible working. "We want to have the best people possible, so we have to make ourselves an attractive business to a more diverse demographic or to a wider, more diverse pool of people," he says.

*For more on the projects mentioned, see pages 16-19.*

# EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

To the east of Cardiff our local team is making headlines in its role to deliver a new state-of-the-art school and sports centre



The moniker 'super school' is often bandied around the development of new educational facilities. The construction of the £25m Eastern High School in Cardiff is a perfect example. Our team has been working on the project since June 2016 and the completed scheme will see state-of-the-art classrooms, laboratories, leisure and sports facilities delivered to the residents of Rumney, on the eastern fringes of the city, for the first time.

The new school offers a further education tie-in with Cardiff and Vale College, and when completed in January 2018, it will offer spaces

for 1,200 school-age pupils as well as further-education facilities for 300 college students.

Those classrooms and lecture theatres will be supplemented by the latest sports pitches and gymnasium facilities, which will also be open to the community once the school day has finished. It is just part of a project that not only bristles with construction excellence but also with community engagement, both in the immediate community and that of the wider south Wales region.

#### New location

Unlike most new school projects



**"It has proven to be a quick and cost-effective ground improvement method"**

**Matt Walsh, assistant build manager, Eastern High School**

that tend to utilise the school's existing site and build on a section of the playing fields, the Eastern High School is being constructed on a site that is remote from the existing school on one of Cardiff and Vale College's campuses. The 1970's college has been razed to the ground with the site levelled in a series of plateaus. In some areas 2.5 metres have been cut, with others filled to three metres. Around 10,000 cubic metres of arisings have been reused on site.

The team has installed a series of stone piles to improve the ground and help ensure a constant bearing capacity throughout.

"It has proven to be a quick and cost-effective ground improvement method," says assistant build manager Matt Walsh.

Thanks to that improvement, the structure is founded on a series of 450-millimetre-square pads at depths of 2.5 metres, with a series of ground beams and 175-millimetre ground-bearing slabs. The school building is a steel-framed structure set on two levels, with an open atrium in the cafeteria and walkways at first-floor level. There are spans of up to 15 metres, which pointed the team down the steel-frame route.

The SFS walls are clad in a range of finishes including brickwork and cladding panels, and are highly insulated which, coupled

**Darren Roberts: Soldiering on**

It's just over a year into his construction career but our assistant health and safety manager on the Eastern High School project is adjusting well, following his move from a 20-year stint in the Royal Marines and a further six years in the maritime security sector.

"There are parallels between the construction industry and the services," says Darren (pictured, top-right).

"Getting used to the new terminology has been one of the most challenging factors, but in terms of security and safety the risk-assessment process is very similar."

When not at work, Darren, originally from North Wales but now a South Wales resident, is either a "touchline Dad" watching his children play sport near his Monmouthshire home, or sating his thirst for adventure by mountaineering in the Himalayas or the Andes.



**Top:** Darren Roberts, assistant health and safety manager on the Eastern High School project.

**Above:** Sam Withers, management trainee.

**Sam Withers: Fly-half lands on his feet**

One of the latest recruits to the Willmott Dixon fold is management trainee Sam Withers (pictured, above). He has three years left to run on the four-year management training scheme, but already has picked up vital experience on a clutch of major projects, including our recently completed office development at 1 Central Square in the centre of Cardiff, and the Islwyn High School scheme in Caerphilly.

"I really enjoy my work," he says. "I am focused on my career and want to do well. Going to university wasn't an option for me and the training scheme helps give me the practical experience to back up my college work."

Golf-playing Sam has taken on the role of looking after the work at the Rumney Library, something that is a long way from his days playing rugby in New Zealand. "I've always played rugby. I played age-grade with the Cardiff Blues and then went and played for a season in South Island, New Zealand. I still enjoy playing but it can be difficult to fit it in around work on Saturdays," he says.



**Richard Jones:**  
20 years and counting

"I have been with Willmott Dixon for 20 years and that is not untypical," says Richard Jones (pictured, left). "One bricklayer was with us for almost 50 years, but 25 years or more of service doesn't even raise an eyebrow." Richard started as a site manager on the Lloyds TSB project in Newport in 1998, then worked his way up to become operations director five years ago. "South Wales and the West is a very competitive region but the way we have grown organically as a business has served us well. We are more focused on our own people and that has aligned with the way the business has performed since the downturn. I think that culture has kept me here."

Above: Richard Jones, operations director; and right: Matt Walsh, assistant build manager.

**"We have worked in partnership with Prescoed open prison in Usk to give ex-offenders a helping hand back into life on the outside"**

**Richard Wilson, operations director**

with the target air-tightness value of five changes per hour, will make the completed building highly energy-efficient.

"It is a model that is refreshing to see and will benefit the entire community," says operations director Richard Jones. "This is a challenging area. People feel as if they have been ignored in the past. This project has been talked about for 10 years or so, and now that it is becoming a reality the residents have really bought into it."

**Driving local jobs**

Throughout the scheme Richard and the rest of our site team have been keen to use the project to help push jobs and career opportunities within the local community. They have looked at ways of engaging with the



**Matt Walsh:**  
Construction is second-nature

Assistant build manager Matt Walsh (pictured, above) is another person on the Rumney site who has come into the industry through our management training programme – not that he would have had it any other way. "I've always been interested in construction," he says. "There are quite a few of my family who are in the industry and I have long recognised what a fantastic career the sector can offer."

But initially Matt's plan was to become a quantity surveyor. A spell of work experience with us was enough to turn his head to the production side of the business. "I did a placement with Willmott Dixon, which made me undecided about where I thought I would like to go. I realised I like being out on site and thought it would suit me better. I haven't looked back since," he says.

community and helped bring in apprenticeships and work experience for local school-leavers.

"The scheme was tendered under the SEWSCAP framework, which has set targets for recruitment, training and employment," explains Richard. "Here we have tried to go over and above those targets with the help of our supply chain. The construction industry in South Wales is quite a close-knit community in itself and it has responded well."

And our bid to help attract more into the industry reaches beyond Rumney. Thanks to a couple of initiatives operated by the team at Eastern High School, we have looked at bringing in ex-forces personnel and offenders that are reaching the end of their prison sentences. Both strategies have been extremely successful.

"Ex-military personnel can struggle with life on civvy street once they have left the forces. They do have a lot to offer though. There are lots of skill sets that apply to both the construction industry and the armed forces," explains Richard, adding: "We have worked in partnership with Prescoed open prison in Usk to give ex-offenders a helping hand back into life on the outside. They relish the opportunity to prove themselves and move on with their lives, and it is important that someone is able to offer them that chance."

But our work with the community isn't just related to employment opportunities. We are working alongside local group Community Action for Rumney Library (CARL) to revamp the library, which had been earmarked for closure. With a team of volunteers from our supply chain, the entrance foyer to the building is being rejigged to provide enhanced access, disability toilets and PIR automated doors.

"The library project was identified during our early involvement in the Eastern High scheme," says Richard. "We were looking to give something back to the community and the tie-in with CARL was the perfect opportunity."

# MAPPING EXPANSION

Wales and the West is witnessing 'phenomenal' expansion; we highlight key projects across the region helping to drive that growth



**Aquatic Resource Centre, Exeter**

**Value:** £9m  
**Client:** University of Exeter  
**Completion date:** January 2018  
This state-of-the-art aquarium facility delivers a world-class teaching and research complex with 14 aquaria rooms, housing 600 experimental tanks and seven laboratories. There is also a new reception and a cutting-edge imaging unit.



**Withybush School, Wales**

**Value:** £23.9m  
**Client:** Pembrokeshire County Council  
**Completion date:** August 2018 (phase one) and December 2018 (phase two) The 98-week project is providing two new teaching blocks for 960 pupils from 3-16 years. The team is aiming to achieve a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating on completion.



**Finzels Reach, Bristol**

**Value:** £46m  
**Client:** Cubex Land  
**Completion date:** January 2019  
The 194-home Finzels Reach development on the site of a former brewery is Bristol's largest build-to-rent residential project. The scheme is being built over two blocks of one and two-bedroom apartments, aiming to cater for Bristol's surge in young professional workers.



**The Box, Plymouth**

**Value:** £34m  
**Client:** Plymouth City Council  
**Completion date:** December 2018  
Our team is transforming the City Museum and Art Gallery, Central Library and St Luke's Church buildings into an expanded new centre called The Box. The Box is part of Plymouth's 400th anniversary commemorations for the Mayflower sailing from Plymouth to America, and will include five exhibition and five gallery spaces.

## The sky's the limit!



Neal Stephens is managing director of Wales and the West and has held that role since 2009. In that period, turnover at the LCO has doubled to £165m this year and is set to grow to £200m in 2018.

Here, Neal discusses the projects that are driving this impressive expansion and reveals the highlight of his year (clue: it may just have something to do with the annual staff survey!).

**Q: What's the headline news from your LCO?**

**A:** "The growth of the LCO in Wales and the South West has been phenomenal. We now employ 160 people in Cardiff and are moving to a new office at Cardiff Bay – it's an exciting time! The Exeter office opened in May 2016 and is really booming. We have won some excellent projects and are now working with clients further into the South West.

"Also, every year we have a staff survey and we are the top LCO for the second year running. Rick Willmott made the presentation, and to win this again has been a real highlight of my year."

**Q: Great stuff! What are some of your key projects?**

**A:** "The £20m Met Office supercomputer facility in Exeter that completed in 2016 was a massively important project for us, as it really helped put us on the map in the South West. Delivering the £34m The Box project in Plymouth is a major target for us as it is intended to mark the 400th anniversary of the sailing of The Mayflower across the Atlantic, so it has to be completed by 2020," (see map).

**Q: What are the main sectors for Wales and the South West?**

**A:** "Besides education and higher education, the key sectors for us are commercial office blocks and 'blue light' emergency services facilities. We also see defence as a growth area, having won work with DSTL Portondown.

"As we expand throughout Wales and the West, we are still building our brand. We have gone from no presence in Bristol 12 years ago to being a top-three contractor, and we are now the leading contractor in Wales. It shows what can be achieved with high-quality people and great client relationships to match!"



# GREEN STRIDES

Willmott Dixon is already blazing a trail in carbon neutrality, but Julia Barrett – director, Re-Thinking – is confident that we will go even further

As the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said in a speech this year, “Green business is good business... those companies who fail to bet on the green economy will be living in a grey future.” It is clear that, as well as the environmental argument for sustainability, there is also a growing business case for going green.

Our company is already blazing a green trail for the UK construction sector. Over the past five years the Group has slashed its 2010 levels of carbon emission intensity by 42%, won a Queen’s Award for Enterprise

for sustainable development, and has, uniquely in the construction sector, been carbon neutral since 2012. We are also the only British construction company to use renewably generated electricity on its construction sites as standard. Spearheading these efforts is Julia Barrett, director of Re-Thinking, our in-house sustainability team. “We have a responsibility to the planet,” she says. “Being a family-owned company, we are driven by our values, first and foremost.”

The strides the Group has made in sustainability have produced wider benefits than a reduction in

its carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. It has, Julia asserts, made the company more competitive and better-performing, and the journey is far from over.

Julia joined Willmott Dixon in 2012, just before the company achieved its first big sustainability target: becoming carbon neutral (see box, opposite).

“To be carbon neutral, you work out how much carbon you have emitted, and you offset those emissions by buying credits in overseas projects, which are reducing carbon emissions by an equivalent amount,” she explains.

The projects in which we have

invested to achieve and maintain our carbon neutrality are carefully selected to be compatible with the Group’s emphasis on creating social value. For example, a project in Uganda which, as well as subsidising the sale of cleaner, more efficient cookstoves, is helping families save money, and enabling women to set up their own micro-businesses.

“We’ve offset 10,597 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> with that project,” says Julia.

But being carbon neutral is only one part of the Group’s drive towards greater sustainability.

Offsetting carbon emissions is all well and good, but actually cutting

**“We are all on the same side when it comes to doing the right thing for the planet and for our children”**

**Julia Barrett, director, Re-Thinking**

those emissions in the first place is even better. “This aim might seem incompatible with our business objective of winning more work – but our aim is to decouple our emissions from business growth.”

In 2010, the Group pledged to reduce its carbon emission intensity – the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted, divided by the company’s turnover – by 15% before the end of 2015. “We achieved nearer 30%,” says Julia. “So in 2015 we extended our target to a 50% reduction on 2010 levels by 2020. By the end of 2016 we had already achieved 42%. We are right on track.”

That demonstrates terrific progress, but it hasn’t always been straightforward. Over the first four years the Group’s emissions actually rose slightly.

“It proved to us how focused we need to be,” Julia says. Initially, that focus was directed at the diesel used in generators on site and in company vehicles, but it soon moved to the electricity in on-site cabin setups. “We found that 50% of electricity usage on any site was in the cabins, and half of that was on evenings and weekends,” explains Julia.

Evidently, the Group has made solid progress on addressing these issues, but it wouldn’t be possible without tweaking the company’s culture, too. “The work of my team is not about finding technological solutions, it’s about culture change,” says Julia.

That cultural shift is, she believes, now embedded through the company: “We haven’t got to cajole people anymore – they come to us with ideas.”

All of this makes Julia confident that the 50% target will be reached within the next couple of years.

“We are all on the same side when it comes to doing the right thing for the planet and for our children.”



**Opposite, left and below:** our carbon offsetting project in Uganda has provided people across the country with fuel-efficient cookstoves, while enabling the Group to offset 10,597 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

## CARBON BY NUMBERS

**5**  
Years that Willmott Dixon has been carbon neutral

**10,597**  
Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> that have been offset through the Uganda cookstoves project

**50%**  
Carbon emissions intensity reduction target between 2010 and 2020

**42%**  
Cut in carbon emissions intensity achieved by the end of 2016

## JULIA BARRETT Q&A

### What was your first job?

I was a chemical engineer with ICI in Runcorn making dry cleaning solvent. I often wonder how I ended up working in sustainability!

### What are you most proud of professionally?

When Willmott Dixon was crowned sustainable business of the year at the 2015 Edie awards.

### What gets you up in the morning?

Loving my job, and the ability to make a difference by working with so many great people for a business that is truly committed to sustainability.

### What do you do to relax outside work?

I used to play tennis twice a week and am busy doing physio to hopefully enable me to do that again – in the meantime I am supporting my son’s passion for Rugby Union.

### If you could be prime minister for a day, what law would you pass?

I wouldn’t pass just one... top of the list, though, would be to take the subsidies given to fossil fuels and invest it in renewable energy generation.



# WHITEHALL CALLING

Willmott Dixon Interiors demonstrates its prowess for high-profile projects on three buildings in Westminster



Walking to success: our team delivering a new future for the world-famous Old Admiralty Building.

There is no clearer testament to the extent to which Interiors (WDI) has been transformed over the past few years than its success in being appointed on a string of high-profile projects. In 2016 it transformed the grade two listed Commonwealth Institute in Kensington, west London, into the new home for the Design Museum. Now it is the turn of Westminster to harness the broad expertise of its teams, as they set out to reconfigure high-profile listed historical buildings with new internal structures, and offer fast-track fit-outs harnessing BIM (building information modelling) and VR (virtual reality), to provide efficient modern offices for more than 2,500 civil servants. Here we look at three key Whitehall projects that demonstrate how WDI is standing out from the competition.

**Name: Old Admiralty Building**  
**Client:** Department for Education  
**Size of project:** £75.5m  
**Completion:** End 2018/early 2019  
**Interesting fact:** Winston Churchill had rooms there when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, and *James Bond* author and ex-naval intelligence officer Ian Fleming was located there during World War II in 'Room 39'.

As the backdrop to the annual Trooping the Colour, the grade two listed Old Admiralty Building near Horse Guards Parade is one of the most recognisable and ornate buildings in the government's Whitehall estate. Most recently used by the Foreign Office, it dates back to 1726 but is now being transformed for a modern purpose as the new head office for the Department for Education (DfE). The project shows off our ability to deliver complex refurbishment of historic buildings, and also demonstrates how two teams from WDI and Construction can merge skillsets for our customers' benefit. Over two years a joint WDI

and Hitchin team is transforming 23,000m<sup>2</sup> of space into a modern working environment for 1,600 people. It is the largest project ever awarded under the Scape Group's Major Works framework, says Jason Wellard, WDI's operations director leading the team at the Old Admiralty Building. Once completed, it will allow the DfE to relocate from Great Smith Street. "The brief was to create a modern working environment, provide flexible working and foster active collaboration," says Jason.

**Warren of offices**  
 Inside is a warren of 610 rooms, and its grade two listed status limits the demolition of internal walls. Jason's team set about creating more open spaces by opening up the rooms into the wide corridors. Enabling works involved stripping out, structural alterations, asbestos removal and building works for services. The Category B fit-out includes new M&E services, a new toilet core, external cladding to the riser as well as new ceilings, partitions, raised

floors and secondary glazing. It also calls for floor, wall and ceiling decoration as well as fire-proofing and compartmentation. "There is a lot of heritage work and ornate features, including oak panelling and mosaic flooring, but it's not a restoration as such," explains Jason. "We're repairing, but we're also keeping features with their wear and tear over the years to maintain the heritage – even bomb damage from World War Two is being protected!" Hitchin won the tender in November 2016 for the £22m enabling works contract to replace an existing contractor, with WDI appointed in May 2017 on the £53.5m fit-out contract. The high value and nature of the work made it sensible for both teams to act as one organisation. "This arrangement allows quicker progress," says Jason. "We couldn't have had two separate contractors working on the site and do the work in the timescale."

**Top team**  
 Day-to-day operations are overseen by Chris Linfoot, who has two construction managers in Sat Chima and Jiddi Cuba, and commercial manager Danny Malone. Under the contract, Willmott Dixon is not responsible for design. Instead, the DfE has its own architect, BDP, and M&E consultant Hoare Lee. "It was challenging being appointed under two separate contracts, and of course there is the issue of working in such a high-security area. We have certain times when works are limited, including during Trooping the Colour and Changing the Guard. "But it's fantastic how two parts of our organisation have come together – people love the team



Maps used by Winston Churchill are still evident in his former office.

ethos, and the camaraderie is fantastic. There is not a customer in London who wouldn't want this team on their job."

**Name:** Canon Row  
**Client:** Strategic Estates/House of Commons  
**Size of project:** £36m  
**Completion:** May 2018  
**Interesting fact:** Originally built as a police station, with cells and stables in 1900 at a cost of £36,000. Canon Row police station remained in operation until 1992, when it was amalgamated with Bow Street Police Station to form the new Charing Cross station.

Modernising historic but increasingly unfit offices for 21st-century working doesn't come more intricate or labour-intensive than transforming Canon Row. Here, WDI's expertise in 'cut and carve' has been brought to the fore as the team, led by senior operations manager Greg Wright, sets about reconfiguring and updating the former police station.

Canon Row is a grade two brick-and-stone listed building behind Portcullis House on the northern part of the Parliamentary Estate. It comprises four and five storeys, plus a basement, and is now used as an administration centre for the Palace of Westminster, providing office accommodation for parliamentary security and parliamentary broadcasting facilities in times of emergency.

The firm's involvement began in September 2016 when it won a 15-week enabling works contract that included asbestos removal and a fingertip survey to source all existing cables running through the building. The contract for the main works, again appointed under Scape's Major Works Framework, was signed in February 2017. The 89-week design-and-build contract is an NEC Option A form.

Like much of the Westminster Estate, Canon Row is made up of small rooms with internal partitions. The programme of works has involved stripping out, upgrading M&E services



and reconfiguring the layout and structure of the space.

"Our general requirement was to replace services, stop water ingress and generally bring it up to modern standards," says Greg, who specialised in structural interior projects before joining WDI.

**Painstaking work**

It also includes new lifts and staircases and additional steelwork to strengthen floors. Since work began the job has been extended

to include extra work in the basement, increasing the contract value from £24m to £36m.

"It's a sequential, painstaking job removing floors, installing temporary works and putting in steelwork," explains Greg. "We're also lowering the basement by 400mm, which involves removing slabs and bringing up the material on a conveyor rigged up to run through lightwells."

The team is then tanking and waterproofing the entire basement

and installing a new high-voltage supply to make the building independent of the entire network.

Sensitive operations adjoin the works, requiring the contracting team to take extra care both in terms of noise and general procedures. A functioning gym currently occupies part of the basement. The adjacent Norman Shaw building is home to many MPs – including the office of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn – and the linked bridge serves as the security centre for the whole of the Parliamentary Estate.

Critically, cables and exit routes for this security operation run through Canon Row.

"The main challenge working on the Parliamentary Estate is the stringent security regime," explains Greg. For example, all delivery lorries must report to a depot elsewhere in the capital, where they are checked and sealed until they arrive at the Canon Row site. And extra time has to be built in to the programme to allow for security checks of works personnel, which can take several weeks to get approval for.

**Above:** Refurbishment specialist Greg Wright at Canon Row.

**Left:** Our Canon Row team outside the entrance to the high-security location.

**Name:** Department of Health

**Client:** Department of Health

**Size of project:** £11.5m

**Completion:** August 2017

**Interesting fact:** Health secretary Jeremy Hunt got a sneak preview of what his new office would look like by wearing virtual reality (VR) goggles.

If the Old Admiralty and Canon Row are a marathon of intensive and painstaking work, 39 Victoria Street is at the other end of WDI's capability spectrum: a 13-month sprint of high-end fit-out facilitated by BIM (building information modelling) and VR.

In fact, the team won a 'Best Overall BIM Project' at a recent RICS awards for their work in providing a new home for the Department of Health.

**Category B fit-out**

The £11.5m project entailed a Category B fit-out of the 11-storey building, using the company's in-house design team. While Category A fit-out involves fitting or upgrading the base services, such as ceilings and raised access floors, Category B includes more bespoke building elements. At the new Department of Health, the scope of work included building a ground-floor restaurant, conference facilities, meeting rooms, IT rooms, ministers' offices and carpeting.

The 9,000sq m fit-out was completed in August 2017 and some of the 1,000 staff, who are relocating from three different buildings around Westminster, started moving in during October. The MPs are expected to use the vacant Department of Health Building on Whitehall as a debating chamber while the Houses of Parliament undergoes its extensive £7bn renovation.

Jon Coles, WDI director of operations, says it was an enormous coup to have landed the prestigious, fast-paced scheme.

**BIM to the fore**

The client's requirements were to implement BIM Level 2 in accordance with the government



**Left:** The main entrance for the Department of Health's new Victoria Street head office.

**Below left:** Jason Wellard, WDI operations director leading the team on the Old Admiralty Building.

**Below right:** Jon Coles, WDI director of operations for the Department of Health project.



BIM mandate. "We've used BIM on a number of projects, but because we designed the scheme in-house it gave our head of BIM the ability to drive the technology and maximise its benefits," says Jon.

The building had already undergone a recent Category A fit-out, so the BIM team had expected to be furnished with high-quality



operations and maintenance data to be fed into the BIM model. Unfortunately, most of the data was unavailable or incorrect, which presented a major challenge within the restrictive timescales. Instead, our team undertook a 'point cloud' survey of the existing building to verify the dimensions of the site.

Another advantage of applying

BIM on this project was the production of visualisations, animations and VR presentation to support the client's understanding of the project.

As a result, some of the material finishes in the design were modified. The BIM data was then handed over to the client to allow them to manage the building better over its lifetime.

Jon and his team also applied the soft-landings process at the end, which meant a gradual handover to ensure that the building was commissioned properly and any snags ironed out. "At completion there were no defects," he says proudly.

As testament to how well the project was received, the team has recently been appointed to carry out a similar job at Quarry House, the Department of Health's office in Leeds.

# YOUR STARTER FOR 10

As universities have developed to attract the best staff and students, our company has evolved new skills and solutions to keep pace – here’s how we’re measuring up



Universities are in a golden age of development with billions of pounds being poured into new facilities and external spaces. Investment is considered essential to attract research funding, lure the best students and staff from home and abroad, and help secure an elevated position in those all-important league tables.

The Higher Education Estates Statistics Report 2016 showed that universities spent £2.75bn on capital projects in the previous 12 months, and they have been turning increasingly to Willmott Dixon with the result that workload in higher and further education is now at record levels.

At £200m per annum it accounts for a significant part of turnover at both Construction and Interiors.

“The market has changed hugely,” says Richard James, higher education and further education sector manager.

“The way universities are funded with the introduction of student fees has meant that they are run in a more businesslike manner, and also that students have more of a voice.”

More than a third of students say that when considering where to study they reject institutions because of the poor quality of buildings, facilities and the physical environment, according to new research by the

## Onsite: The Oculus Building

**Location:** Coventry  
**Facilities:** Lecture theatres, 12 individual teaching spaces, social learning and networking areas, a café and outdoor terraces, in addition to state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment  
**Value:** £14m  
**Environmental rating:** BREEAM ‘Excellent’  
**Client:** University of Warwick  
**LCO team:** Birmingham



Association of University Directors of Estates.

Universities have responded with the development of space that enhances students’ experience and wellbeing. Provision includes attractive outdoor parks, gardens and squares, and the creation of indoor ‘student hubs’, which combine social learning spaces with café-filled atria.

Our LCO teams are working on a number of developments like this. One of them is a £21m student hub being delivered by Cobham’s Adam Worrall and his team at the University of Greenwich, which involves refurbishing the grade two listed Dreadnought Building, dating back to the 1700s, on Greenwich’s World Heritage Site.

Manchester delivered Coventry University’s first campus away from Coventry, in Scarborough, while Wales and the West built the flagship Student Centre and Fusion buildings at the University of Bournemouth.

The second big trend that continues to emerge is the drive to make more efficient use of university estates – which often means developing shared lecture theatres and teaching spaces across a number of faculties. This makes better use of the facility but also fosters collaboration – another watchword. At the University of Warwick, for

example, a Birmingham team led by Ian Williamson, has built the new Oculus Building (pictured, opposite, and see box, above) while Cobham built the Sibson Building at the University of Kent, handed over in January this year (see box, below). As the number of stakeholders – academics, estate department staff and students – increases, our teams have become adroit at bringing them together to help share ideas and concerns and build trust.

Improving the wellbeing of students and staff has also

become a higher priority across universities, and again, the estate is being developed to reflect this trend. The greater onus on better mental and physical health is manifesting itself with investment in landscaping and outdoor pavilions and state-of-the-art sports centres. Our expertise is being harnessed on projects with these priorities, such as an outstanding new sports centre at the University of Warwick.

Another example is at the University of Birmingham, where we are landscaping a

£12m ‘green heart’, which broke ground in September. The 12-acre park, complete with a stream running through it, will provide a unique space for performances, socialising, meeting and studying.

Richard says the success our company enjoys in the sector comes down to “understanding what customers need, which allows us to present solutions”.

However, higher education certainly isn’t without its challenges, he concedes: “Many universities have huge campuses with 10 to 15-year masterplans; delivering on those when costs have risen really does demand a highly collaborative approach to create efficiencies and give value.

“We’ve recently been engaged in four schemes for the University of Manchester and five for Birmingham, for example.

“The fact that universities come back to us again and again is testament to the fact we are delivering high-class facilities that are the best in the world.”

## Collaboration rules in Kent

The Sibson Building at the University of Kent in Canterbury is an exemplar of aspiration in higher education for space-sharing and collaboration, as well as for innovative thinking in delivery.

## Onsite: The Sibson Building

**Location:** Canterbury  
**Facilities:** 8,000m<sup>2</sup> state-of-the-art teaching space  
**Value:** £26m  
**Environmental rating:** BREEAM ‘Excellent’  
**Client:** University of Kent  
**LCO team:** Cobham





**Left:** The Sibson building for the University of Kent is its biggest investment in 50 years.

**Below:** Richard James, higher education and further education sector manager

Handed over in January 2017, the iconic £26m building was designed by Penoyre & Prasad and is the biggest investment by the university in 50 years. The five-storey, 8,000sq m building is home to Kent Business School and the School of Mathematics, Statistics & Actuarial Science, and is a campus 'destination' for students.

The space includes 5,600m<sup>2</sup> of academic and research workspaces, administration and reception areas for the two schools and 2,350m<sup>2</sup> of teaching and learning spaces.

For Adam Worrall, Cobham's director of operations, the overriding memory of the project is how well the team worked together. "It was really buzzing and dynamic. I would meet with five or six key people, including our client, the university estates department and the architect and PQS in informal meetings, and we'd get everything out in the open.

"It really helped build trust and decision-making. It's something I want to do on all projects I'm involved in."

Built on a split-level site, which required innovative piling, Adam says it was a taxing job, not least in realising the stunning design within the budget. "It meant working in a highly collaborative way to take out costs without any visible impact." The building was

awarded BREEAM 'Excellent'.

Willmott Dixon staff have drawn high praise from the university. The head of estates for the university, Peter Czarnomski, described it as "the best construction project I have ever worked on".

#### Double-first at Warwick

Warwick University is another academic centre of excellence that is pioneering the creation of shared facilities and boosting wellbeing, with a new sports building to create the UK's most physically active university campus – both delivered by Birmingham.

The Oculus Building, completed under a design-and-build contract in August 2016, is the first dedicated teaching space with bookable facilities available to all faculties. It was born out of research by the University's Institution of Advanced Learning, which found that the teaching and learning experience could be enhanced by having multi-faculty buildings to share knowledge and encourage socialising.

The two-storey building provides new facilities for more than 1,000 students, including a 500-seat lecture theatre and another 250-seat theatre on the floor above.

"This arrangement enabled us to maximise the space in the building within the minimum footprint

#### "It meant working in a highly collaborative way to take out costs without any visible impact"

**Adam Worrall, director of operations, Cobham**

on what was a green field on the campus," says design manager Ben Reaney. It was procured via Scape Group's Major Works framework.

The £14m project is built with natural ventilation and durable and sustainable materials to both reduce its carbon footprint and enhance the architecture, and help it gain a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating. The most notable feature is the 36-metre barrel-vaulted glulam roof designed by architect Berman Guedes Stretton which, as well as being sustainable, has created a column-free teaching space.

Ben says: "We were involved in all stages from zero to handover. It certainly was a challenging project – not least because of the number of stakeholders, who were all so passionate about it."

Following the success of the Oculus Building, Willmott Dixon has been appointed for its second project at Warwick, the £36m Sports and Wellness Hub – this time under the Constructing West Midlands Framework. When

complete in 2019, the Hub will offer a world-class sporting experience for students, staff and the local community. Replacing all current sporting facilities on campus, the Hub will feature a sports hall, a swimming pool, fitness suites, climbing and bouldering walls and flexible studio spaces, as well as squash courts, outdoor 3G sports pitches and netball courts.

Senior design manager Richard Clark says that the building is aiming for high sustainability credentials with an emphasis on saving energy and enhancing wellbeing.

"Whilst it is undeniably a sports facility, it's not necessarily just going to be used for sport. For example, the café and viewing areas will provide welcoming spaces for people to socialise, study and share ideas away from the more formalised academic environment of a library or study room, but without having to actively participate in a sport.

"And the gently landscaped external spaces will provide further opportunities for outside performances and socialising, and perhaps a pleasurable outdoor escape from the mental rigours of academia. All this the university sees as potentially contributing to the wellbeing of its community."



# TOP TALENT

*In this first page of a special section on Willmott Dixon's talent and how it is nurtured, we celebrate our achievements at the Construction Manager of the Year Awards*

The annual construction Oscars saw a Manchester double with Andy Beale scooping gold and Wayne Bramley picking up silver in their categories.

The Construction Manager of the Year Awards highlight the very best in project management, and more of our people have won gold medals in the past ten years than in any other company.

This year it was Andy who joined previous winners such as Ross Taylor, James Elliment, Phil Cracknell, Mike Walmsley, Gemma Bown and Mark Pitman in being crowned 'best in class' for their leadership skills.

Andy won praise in the fit-out category for ensuring hedgehogs, newts, bats and peregrine falcons didn't derail his work to breathe new life into Bolton's grade two listed town centre landmark.

He was joined on the night by Wayne Bramley, who took silver in the public infrastructure category for his work delivering Barnsley Custody Suite four weeks early and defect-free.

Afterwards, Rick Willmott said: "I'm delighted for Andy, Wayne and all our finalists who again represented our company with distinction at these showcase awards. We invest more than the



**"We invest more than the industry average in the training and development of our people to give them the best skills"**

**Rick Willmott**

industry average in the training and development of our people to give them the best skills, and our ongoing success in the Construction Manager Awards is testament to the quality we have in our company."

Congratulations to all of our 12 finalists this year: Richard Abrams, Chris Baker, Andy Beale, Christian Bohlin, Wayne Bramley, Kristian Cartwright, Mark Elliot, Jamie Hawkins, Hazel Martin, Jarrad Owen, Paul Smith and Marc Turner. Your presence on the night is another benchmark for the quality people our customers can expect on their projects!

# 15 TOP TALENT

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

When Simon Abbott's line manager had to take a leave of absence, Simon stepped in – and all his hard work has paid off

"Surveys don't usually win awards," says Simon Abbott, commercial manager for Birmingham's Milton Keynes framework, with a self-deprecating chuckle. If that's true, then he must be the exception that proves the rule.

Earlier this year, Simon was presented with Construction's national Above and Beyond award at a ceremony in London, after having been nominated by several colleagues. "It was very humbling – I didn't expect to win," he says.

The award is given for exceptional behaviour in exceptional circumstances. In early 2016, a family illness meant Simon's line manager had to take a leave of absence.

Simon took over the role from April 2016 until October that year in what was, he admits, a daunting

leap in responsibility. It wasn't just a case of stepping into his manager's shoes, though: Simon says the biggest challenge was keeping his normal day job ticking over at the same time.

"Getting the reports and responsibilities for Milton Keynes projects together while assuming responsibility for all the other projects in the South Midlands, making sure I could schedule out a week each month to get the data together and attend monthly meetings on each project...It was more pressure on my time and my diary management, which isn't great as it is," he says.

"So yes, it was a bit of a challenge. It meant working weekends at times, working late – but it needed to be done. You do what needs doing." He's quick to thank his colleagues for their



**"In a situation like that you are massively reliant on everyone pulling together, and everyone did"**

**Simon Abbott, commercial manager, Milton Keynes**

support, including operations director Matthew Raybould. If this was a test of team spirit, it is one that Simon feels he and his colleagues not only passed, but that it also reinforced their sense of solidarity.

"Everybody helped – it wasn't just me doing it," he says. "I had a lot of support from my directors.

"We talk a lot about team bonding and all that sort of stuff, and you can get quite blasé about it. But in a situation like that you are massively reliant on everyone

pulling together, and everyone did."

Since stepping down again in October last year, Simon says the experience and the award have motivated him to take on more responsibility within his own role.

"I've got more confidence in my own abilities, because we all have doubts, don't we? The recognition from my family has been great – the parents, as you can imagine; the wife to a lesser extent!"

The colleagues who nominated him add that not only did Simon cope in his temporary role, he did a great job (see box, below).

This was exceptional behaviour in exceptional and unfortunate circumstances: hard work, late nights and extra pressure.

But for Simon, taking it all on in the first place was a simple choice, and nothing to do with awards or recognition.

"You do it for your mate," he says.

### In the words of Simon's colleagues...

*"Where I feel Simon has truly gone above and beyond in his role is in the continued time and effort he put in to maintain his personal involvement with staff during this difficult and busy period – by continuing to take calls, answer queries and maintain interpersonal relationships when it would be understandable to all if he did not."*

*"It is because of his ability to simply listen and help when he didn't have to, along with a genuine enthusiasm to look after his people, that Simon deserves to be nominated...I believe Simon's attitude and personality will be crucial in retaining the best people."*

*"Simon worked so hard: long days, nights and weekends to meet the accounting timetable...His dedication to the business and enthusiasm to get things right were truly outstanding."*

*"In addition to taking on the role, he has supported a number of new starters who have joined to grow the Milton Keynes region, along with existing staff members, providing mentoring where required. To recognise the amount of work Simon has put in to maintaining the additional workload – despite the effect on his personal life – would be fantastic."*

# 15 TOP TALENT



Fortem client PA Housing is delighted with the results that Caroline McGrogan and her team are delivering. Here are Caroline's tips to help others make it to the top

Residents, electricians, plumbers, roofers, administration staff, sub-contractors and members of the client team. These are just some of the individuals Caroline McGrogan works with on a daily basis as general manager of Fortem's £5m-per-year PA Housing contract, which comprises 7,000 properties and homes.

Responsible for the completion of 21,000 responsive repairs and the refurbishment of 500 void properties each year, Caroline works with 19 office staff and 38 in-house tradespeople at the housing association's offices in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

Her average day is crammed with one-to-one meetings, catch-up calls and team briefings. "You have to be a people person in this business," she laughs.

Then there's the constant monitoring of her team's performance – analysing the data and tracking continuous improvement. "Competition is high in this sector," Caroline explains. "Success comes down to balancing the people side of things with achieving efficiencies."

It's a balancing act she's very good at, says Ian Watts, executive director of operations (South East and London) at PA Housing. "Caroline brings out the best in people," he says. "She supports her team, but never loses sight of

performance. Crucially, customer satisfaction is up at over 90 per cent, and when you get the responsive maintenance service right, overall customer satisfaction usually follows."

Caroline, 47, was born in Lisburn, just outside Belfast, and grew up in Dublin, before moving with her family to London when she was 17 years old.

After gaining a degree in quantity surveying, her first permanent job upon graduating from the University of Westminster in 1993 was building surveyor for Westminster City Council, where she worked for seven years (see box, right).

Caroline then moved to Harding Housing Association, which eventually became Viridian Housing. Having joined as maintenance manager in 2000, she was promoted to head of property in 2005 following a merger with Servite.

"We had set up a direct labour organisation in London in 2000, which I led on the maintenance side, and a big part of my new role was to recreate that across the regions. We had 130 operatives when I left in 2010," she recalls.

At this point, Caroline decided it was time to gain experience working in the private sector, so she joined Enterprise Property Services managing its facilities

maintenance contract for Westminster City Council. This role involved working on everything other than people's homes: sports and leisure complexes, schools, administration buildings, and even a mortuary.

Having had a five-year break from housing, in 2015, Caroline joined Willmott Dixon Partnerships, which rebranded as Fortem at the end of last year as part of a strategy to give the senior management team greater operational autonomy to grow the company outside its core social housing market.

Every month, Caroline holds a 'toolbox talk' for the members of her in-house team – who deliver the vast majority of work on the PA Housing contract – as well as for individual sub-contractors.

She gets everybody together in order to pass on the compliments she's received from happy customers and to fill them in on community updates. She also shares details of their collective performance against key performance indicators and any wider business news.

As Fortem, which was already turning over £145m before the rebrand, pushes forward into other sectors, experience continues to teach Caroline that in order to achieve positive outcomes in any contract, managers must "keep people motivated and bring them with you, while focusing on delivery," she says.

It's an approach that certainly seems to be working for PA Housing. As Ian Watts sums up: "Caroline really drives performance. The service has never been as good as it is now."

## Caroline's career dos and don'ts

### Do your research before choosing your degree.

"Look into the specifics of the course before rushing in. Take time to make the right decision. I did a degree in quantity surveying, which is very technical and maths-based, but I got sidetracked into building surveying soon after graduating. For me, building surveying is more interesting – it involves working with a wide range of people to produce something you can actually see and touch."

### Do be prepared to work hard.

"Nothing comes easy. If you want to be successful and good at what you do, you have to work extremely hard."

### Don't be afraid to put yourself out there.

"This is still a male-dominated industry, so as a woman you have to be confident enough to stand up and be counted."

### Don't stay in your comfort zone.

"Get as much experience as you can, as soon as you can – you need to feel good about yourself in order to have the confidence to put yourself across as somebody who should be listened to and respected."

**"Nothing comes easy. If you want to be successful and good at what you do, you have to work extremely hard"**

Caroline McGrogan, general manager, Fortem

# 15 TOP TALENT FOUNDATION CHALLENGE SUPERSTARS!

Our trainees making their mark in the community

Each year our trainees leading the Foundation Challenges for their LCOs keep raising the bar, and 2017 is no exception, with a host of initiatives to improve communal facilities, promote careers in construction and create work opportunities for disadvantaged people.

This year the standard was so high that at the recent awards event, a Highly Commended honour was given to Nathan Taylor, Birmingham, while the overall winner of the 2017 Foundation Challenge was Connor Lambourne, Interiors. Here are some of the great initiatives!

### Charlotte Hall

Be Living trainee Charlotte Hall, pictured right with Nadia Didehvar (left) and Mandi Dhillon, made a huge difference at the Avenues youth project, in between our Moberly and Jubilee sites in Westminster. The Avenues, which helps young people develop self-esteem and draws them away from gangs, lost its funding last year. It needed to turn its kitchen into a café to generate new income, but required our help to achieve this! Thanks to Charlotte's work, we created a thriving new café courtesy of a small but dedicated army of volunteers from Be and Construction.



### Owen Jones

Aaron Jenkins (pictured) from Wales and the West is taking his mentoring role seriously as part of a team led by trainee Owen Jones, who delivered a 'Willmott Dixon in Schools' challenge. This saw 47 colleagues meet 440 pupils at eight schools in Cardiff, Bristol and Exeter to tackle any negative stereotypes of the industry, with a series of activities and role-play to promote the opportunities for a rewarding career in construction. This included careers talks, mock interviews and work experience opportunities.



### Andrew Lee

Andrew Lee (second from right) from Partnership Homes in the Midlands made a splash in the local paper for his work leading a 'Grand Designs' style makeover of a community centre in rural Shropshire. His team redecorated, retiled, and updated electrics and light fittings to give the centre - which provides key community services such as a sports hall, function rooms, nursery and library - some much-needed TLC.



### Jack Oxtoby

Cobham's Adam Richards (left) and Luke Bassett help deliver Jack Oxtoby's big challenge at HM Prison Elmley on the Isle of Sheppey. This saw our team restore a run-down visitor centre to make it a welcoming place for visiting families. Many visitors are children, so Jack's team of 45 volunteers gave 984 hours to ensure it was a decent place for them and their families to visit loved ones.



### Connor Lambourne

2017 winner Connor Lambourne from Interiors gives a hug to Katrina Jinadu at Age UK after he led a team that refurbished its Lewisham and Southwark Healthy Living Centre. The task was to help disadvantaged, homeless and excluded women to get back into work by giving them experience during the refurbishment. After a fast-track course by Connor and team, the volunteers were paired up with suppliers who mentored them. The result was a better hub for older people dealing with isolation and loneliness, and brighter job prospects for volunteers.

### David Moul

IT trainee David Moul helped teach a number of Age UK members like Maureen (pictured) the basics of computing in one-to-one mentoring sessions. This included how to use the internet, write documents and send emails, among others. This was especially important for Maureen, as she had been scammed by a caller claiming to be from Microsoft and had lost confidence in using a computer.



### Ross Pinney

Hitchin's Ross Pinney did his challenge at three schools in Hertfordshire and Essex, where he led a team that gave 153 pupils an insight into our industry through a series of fun activities, career carousels and presentations which put the emphasis on positive engagement. It made a huge impact - with Ross, second from left, joined by teachers Sally Emler, Geraint Edwards and Jonathan Taylor, who showed their appreciation.



# STEPPING INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

As Milton Keynes turns 50, the town is growing fast – and we're at the heart of construction projects helping to make that happen



**Onsite:**  
Milton Keynes Museum

**Location:** McConnell Drive, Milton Keynes  
**Facilities:** New visitor and exhibition centre, supporting a significant expansion of the existing MK Museum  
**Value:** £2m, procured through Scape's Major Works Framework  
**Client:** Milton Keynes Council  
**Completion:** January 2018

Milton Keynes turns 50 this year. It has been the butt of jokes for much of that time – a new town that quickly became a byword for the worst of modern planning, a soulless grid of concrete and glass whose endless roundabouts made escape all but impossible.

But, like most lazy generalisations, this is not borne out by reality. Milton Keynes has quietly gone about defying its critics over the past five decades. This is a city that is on the up.

One survey by a recruitment company last year found Milton Keynes to be the second-best place to work in the UK. Job satisfaction and employment levels are high, while house prices are relatively affordable – and it's a nice place to live, too (see box, page 33).

The architect behind Milton Keynes' expansive grid layout also ensured the city comprised 40% green space. There are 22 million trees lining its parks and roads, and more than 210 miles of footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways winding between them.

So it is perhaps no surprise that Milton Keynes is growing, and growing fast. Between 2005 and 2015, according to Milton Keynes Council, the town's population swelled by 17%, and it is forecast to increase by another 12% by 2026.

It is also perhaps unsurprising that many of these new arrivals in the country's second-best place to work are young families, and preparations for them are already well underway. The council plans to deliver more than 10,000 new primary school places as part of a £160m schools investment programme, and Willmott Dixon Construction has been charged with making that happen.

"In 2014, Milton Keynes had a 24% rise in the number of children going to primary schools on the previous year," says Matthew Raybould, operations director in the South Midlands.

"That gives you an idea of the city's growth. It has been a huge success story."

Before Scape appointed Willmott Dixon to its Major Works

**"Milton Keynes Council has been a great customer and allowed us to develop our people, supply chain partners, our legacy and product"**

**Matthew Raybould, operations director, South Midlands**

Framework almost three years ago, the company already had experience working on education projects in Milton Keynes, including a new primary school and several extensions to existing schools.

But Scape, along with the council's decision to spend £21m on new primary schools beginning in 2015, has ensured that relationship is set to last. Since winning the contract, our company has completed five new primary schools across the town, as well as extensions to two existing schools.

The team in Milton Keynes has been run and developed by operations manager Paul Short

**Milton Keynes facts:**

- No-one in Milton Keynes is ever more than half a mile from a park; the city boasts more than 5,000 acres of parkland, rivers, lakes and woodland.
- If London were built to the same density as Milton Keynes, it would cover East Anglia.
- There are more show homes in Milton Keynes than any other UK city.
- There are 15 lakes and 11 miles of canals in and around the city.
- An average of five new companies move to Milton Keynes every month; in total, more than 5,000 companies have relocated to the area, while more than 71% of all businesses in the city are homegrown.
- Milton Keynes has 130 roundabouts, and that number continues to grow.

*Source: Destination Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes Council*



**Opposite:** David Rowell, senior building manager (left), and Joe O'Leary, site supervisor, Milton Keynes Museum exhibition hall.

**Above:** left to right: Simon Abbott, commercial manager; Celia Thompson, assistant framework coordinator; David Rowell, senior building manager; Jonathan Dyet, project surveyor; and Joe O'Leary, site supervisor.



**Left:** from left to right – Paul Short, operations manager; Bhupinder Panesar, building manager; Manuel Gawlick, management trainee; Callum Headley, senior project surveyor; Sam Smith, senior building manager; and John Clarkson, design manager; at the Brooklands Medical Building site.

**Below left:** Not just about schools – Brooklands Medical Centre is taking shape to give the town a much-needed public health facility.

and commercial manager Simon Abbott, with support from the Coleshill office pre-construction team. You can almost see the speed of growth, Matthew says. “When we’ve been building some of these schools, we could be building in a field in the middle of nowhere – but by the time we’ve finished, there is a housing estate surrounding us.”

It’s not just primary schools, either. The Milton Keynes Museum will be getting a new visitor centre and storage building by the end of this year, and the town will have a brand-new secondary school for children with special educational needs by then, too. Projects to be completed next year are the refurbishment of the council’s Civic Centre and Brooklands Medical Centre, and our residential team are undertaking an affordable housebuilding programme for the council. It’s a dizzying amount of work befitting the town’s dizzying growth – and that suits Matthew and his team just fine. “It’s great that we have this longevity with the customer,” he says. “Milton Keynes Council has been a great customer and allowed us to develop our people, supply chain partners, our legacy and product.”

**“We try to use local people as much as possible... to prove to the customer that we are spending the Milton Keynes pound”**

**Simon Leadbeater, managing director, residential construction**



The council is at the heart of everything Willmott Dixon is doing in the town. Collaborative planning is standard on all projects, and the council pays visits to the construction sites four or five times a week. In terms of the buildings being delivered, this partnership is working well: one of the new schools that was completed last year and two this year were certified defect-free.

The wider community has benefited, too, via employment and training opportunities across sites in Milton Keynes. As of April this year, there were 820 site visits by school and university students, and 713 weeks’ worth of apprenticeships offered. A partnership with Milton Keynes College has given the latter’s construction students the chance to develop their skills, with 226 weeks of work experience provided across three school sites and the museum development.

“On some of our sites we have set up an area for bricklaying and carpentry,” says Matthew. “So when apprentices are working with our supply chain partners and they get rained off, they can practice the skills they have been learning while they wait to be picked up. Little things like that can really help.”

The Milton Keynes team has also been working with two local charities. As well as running marathons and entering dragon boat races to raise around £4,000 for local end-of-life care provider Willen’s Hospice, the team has partnered with MacIntyre, a national charity that provides support to people with learning disabilities. Our people have been volunteering in MacIntyre’s Milton Keynes coffee shop, which has also provided lunches to the workers on site.

And clients of the charity who have visited building sites have been helping out, doing tasks such as painting blockwork. “Just because someone has special needs doesn’t mean they don’t have skills,” says Matthew.

**Local garage scene**

Also through the Scape framework, our residential construction



**Onsite:**  
**Kents Hill Secondary School Campus**

**Location:** Timbold Drive, Milton Keynes

**Facilities:** New secondary school and special educational needs school for a total of 650 pupils; extensive playing fields, 4G sports pitch, hardball court, and cycle shelters and canopies

**Value:** £27m for the campus (including adjacent primary school and nursery); procured through Scape’s Major Works Framework

**Client:** Milton Keynes Council

**Completion:** December 2017



**Above:** assistant building manager Steve Sandles, right, with Rikki Johnson on one of our housing projects in Milton Keynes.

**Above left:** Some of the construction team on the bridge at Kents Hill Secondary School.

**Left:** from left to right – Andy Stockwin, building manager; Phil Eagleton, building manager; Chris Sawbridge, senior project surveyor; and Gerald O’Boyle, construction manager, beneath the timber ceiling at the refurbished Milton Keynes Civic Centre.

team has nearly finished work on 15 new social rent homes for Milton Keynes Council, a mix of bungalows and family homes spread over three sites. As well as helping local residents in urgent need of housing, these small infill developments are regenerating parts of the town that have fallen into disuse.

“These are ex-garage sites: one was an old garden centre that had been leased off the council,” says Simon Leadbeater, managing director for residential construction activity in the Midlands and North.

“They haven’t been developed on

for a while, they were overrun,” he adds. “At the garden centre, local residents were getting a bit of anti-social behaviour.”

Local residents have been fully supportive of the new houses, Simon continues: “They are all willing to see more houses built in Milton Keynes, getting rid of that anti-social behaviour and bringing the land back into use.”

The local economy has had a boost, too. Through Scape, the project team has engaged with local supply chain partners as much as possible. “That has been really important to us,” says Simon.

presented its own challenge.

“You have to consider what’s happening in the future with global warming,” says Simon. “So the drainage capacity is designed to handle 20% more rainfall than we have today. A lot of attenuation goes into the drainage system so that in future it stores water on site rather than discharging quickly into existing infrastructure.”

And there have been one or two issues with creeping fences, too; one or two of the sites’ neighbours have taken advantage of the disused plots of land next door to extend their gardens over the years.

Despite these issues, however, work is ahead of schedule. The council has already inspected the most advanced site: “They were over the moon, hardly picked up anything in terms of quality,” says Simon – and the homes will be ready for their new residents to move in to a couple of weeks early.

“We’ve tried to push it forwards as far as we can, because obviously December is a difficult time for people,” he adds.

“We are trying to get everyone in before Christmas so they can have a brand-new start to the year in a new property.”

“We try to use local people as much as possible, and we monitor it constantly to prove to the customer that we are spending the Milton Keynes pound.”

Small sites like these bring their own set of challenges. They are in residential areas, where managing access at appropriate times is an issue. Blocking roads during the school run is not a way to endear yourself to the neighbours, for one, and so deliveries have been carefully managed to arrive between 9am and 3pm each day. And old garage sites can have very limited drainage, which has



# TEAM COBHAM

The residential team is right at the heart of things in its new home

As the crow flies, Islington to Cobham in Surrey may only be 25 miles, but when the 12-strong residential team made the office move from central London earlier this year it felt a much bigger leap.

"The change was significant," says Ross Taylor, project director for the extra care residential development at Blenheim Park in the London Borough of Hounslow. "To some extent it was like joining a new business with new colleagues and new teams supporting us. But the Cobham team has been so welcoming, and in Roger Forsdyke I have a fantastic MD. We are sat

on a project table in the middle of the office – we are very much at the heart of things and have the perfect opportunity to get to know all things Cobham."

Feeling at home and part of the existing Cobham team, and quickly, was crucial. Former Trainee of the Year Ross explains: "The overarching business objective of combining the housing and construction businesses was that more and more projects require mixed-use skills. We can now offer our customers more flexibility and certainty – and we deliver it all from one office."

He adds that this alignment will further support the 'Building on Better' strategy set out by John Waterman, the chief operating officer of Construction. Ross explains this aims to constantly challenge the norm, try new things and drive innovation, "... ensuring we deliver the best product and experience for our customers".

Ross cites the work of the combined Cobham team with Hounslow as an example of the benefits that can arise from a closer working relationship. He says: "We are now able to look at some other types of schemes on

some other sites that Hounslow is looking to develop." The Cobham office has just completed a waste-transfer station and is looking at developing a community centre. The team is also currently working on the 94-home extra care scheme at Blenheim Park for the local authority (see box, opposite) and at further mixed-use opportunities.

So how has the move gone down with clients? Ross says the reaction has been incredibly positive – exactly as the team hoped. "We invited Andrew Smith, the head of housing at Hounslow, to visit the office, introduce him to

the team and to discuss what we are now doing as a business. He was very happy about the new one-stop-shop with the Cobham team as it works much better for him.

"He was also impressed to see the collaborative working between the Blenheim Park team and their new colleagues."

Although Ross admits some trepidation in the team with the change in location, he agrees that this is an exciting journey.

"It has been a refreshing experience as Cobham is a great office with a high-performing team – it is great to be a part of that."

**"We can now offer our customers more flexibility and certainty – and we deliver it all from one office"**

Ross Taylor, project director, Blenheim Park

**Main picture:** Project surveyor Hana Hassan makes a point in planning a new residential opportunity at Cobham.

**Top-right:** Cobham MD Roger Forsdyke, right, welcomes Ross Taylor to the team.



## Blenheim Park: fire-safety measures in extra care

This 94-home, £26.8m development for the London Borough of Hounslow begins on site in November and will complete in July 2019. Blenheim Park was procured through the Scape framework and, prior to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, had already taken a thorough and robust approach to fire safety.

Project director Ross Taylor explains: "Recent events have forced the construction industry to question every aspect of fire precaution and protection. Many of our customers are using third-party consultants to inspect existing buildings, which if not correct, contractors are being asked to return to rectify."

"Willmott Dixon aims to get it right, first time, every time and the Blenheim Park team, along with their new Cobham colleagues, are underpinning their existing knowledge on fire safety by holding a number of fire-safety workshops."

"These have involved the entire design team to ensure we consider every aspect of the project, using products that are approved by the entire team. We have also involved a third-party fire consultant attend the final fire presentation by the design team and ultimately sign off and check the final strategy."

# ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Our two high-speed rail training colleges open to students, and our Farnborough office celebrates expansion

## HIGH SPEED SUCCESS!

Our two colleges for training the next generation of high-speed rail workers were in the national media spotlight, as both opened in October for the first intake of students.

The colleges in Birmingham and Doncaster are part of a major investment in making the UK world leaders in high-speed rail by providing the skills required for

**“In 10 years when work on HS2 is in full swing, the people building it will be graduates from both colleges”**

**Roger Morton, construction manager**

projects like HS2.

Doncaster was the first to open, with education secretary Justine Greening heaping praise on the facility to a packed audience, followed by Birmingham a week afterwards in a clear show of strength that the UK is getting ready for a period of major infrastructure investment.

Roger Morton led the team at Doncaster, which has already won several local awards. He said: “Remarkable but true – we can say that the first section of HS2 track was laid by us in Doncaster as part of the high-tech training facilities now on offer. In 10 years when work on HS2 is in full swing, the people building it will be graduates from both colleges.”



**Celebrating a fast-track future:** Scape’s CEO Mark Robinson, left, and national framework manager Paula Ibberson, second from right, joins our team, from left – Chris Farr, Roger Morton and Anthony Dillon, Manchester MD, at the launch of the National College of High Speed Rail in Doncaster.

## FARNBOROUGH IS SOARING!

Farnborough is famous for hosting an international air show every two years but now has another claim to fame – as home to our latest regional expansion.

Our Farnborough office is targeting a £100m pipeline of work by 2020 in Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire and Dorset.

In the 12 months since its launch, the team has bagged significant projects like Calthorpe School Sports Hall for Hart District Council, York House in Windsor, Barton Farm Primary School for Hampshire County Council and a hotel for Village Urban Resorts.

To help deliver this work and win more, you need good-quality people, and the team has grown



from 18 to 60 in 12 months thanks to transfers from our Cobham office and attracting top-draw recruits. They are already halfway towards reaching their 2020 turnover target – a big well done to Richard Poulter and the team!

**“To help deliver this work and win more, you need good-quality people, and the team has grown from 18 to 60 in 12 months”**

**Above:** The team at Farnborough has increased threefold as a string of opportunities have meant a bright start at our new office.