

## New Academic Building special

November 2008

### Queen opens New Academic Building to great acclaim

On Wednesday 5 November, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II formally opened the New Academic Building on a day which highlighted some of the things at which LSE excels.

There was a real sense of occasion as guests, including alumni, donors, staff and students gathered to await the Queen. Director Howard Davis thanked guests for attending as well as those who had turned the project from a dream into a reality – including all the donors who had given so generously.

The building has been supported by alumni and friends from over 20 countries whose generosity surpassed £10m.

Former School Secretary Christine Challis OBE echoed the views of many when she said: 'It looks stunning.' School governor Roger Davies agreed: 'It's very impressive. LSE has always lacked a little green, yet this building looks over one of the nicest parks in London.' The sense of space offered by the design was commented on by many. Cllr Louise Hymans, lord mayor of Westminster, said: 'It's fabulous; the entrance lobby is so spacious and the colour scheme is lovely.'

Alumnus and donor Nigel Williams commented on the difference that the NAB will make to the student experience: 'The building provides outstanding teaching facilities as well as contemporary meeting rooms and social spaces for students to gather to discuss and exchange ideas outside the lecture theatre. These new facilities will enable even more talented students from across the world to benefit from the opportunities that an LSE education can provide.'

Outside, local children from St Clement Danes primary school waited excitedly for the Her Majesty's arrival, flags in hand. LSE staff and students were also present to be part of this historic occasion. The first



visit of this kind was when King George V (the Queen's grandfather) opened the Old Building in 1920.

There was a hush as the Queen, accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, entered the foyer. Her Majesty greeted LSE pro-directors Sarah Worthington, George Gaskell and Janet Hartley, together with Adrian Hall, Mary Blair, Jean Sykes, and Andrew Farrell. From outside the School, she was introduced to Mark Field MP, Cllr Nural Islam, mayor of Camden and Cllr Louise Hyams, lord mayor of Westminster. Howard Davies then escorted the Queen to the lower ground floor to hear the part of a special discussion on climate change in Africa, chaired by Conor Gearty, director of the LSE Centre for the Study of Human Rights.

Her Majesty toured the building, meeting staff and students from the Departments of Law and Management and the Grantham Institute



of Climate Change. The visit to the Law Department included a stop at LSE's David W Helleniak moot court room which enables students to participate in mock trials. Dr Chaloka Beyani, who chaired the proceedings, said: 'The moot court

went exceedingly well. The case involved the use of force by one state in the territory of another on alleged grounds of humanitarian intervention. Her Majesty watched the proceedings from outside.'

Julian Robinson, director of Planning and Development, Estates Division, spoke to the Queen on the history of the NAB project and academics spoke about their particular areas of management and climate change.

Sir Nicholas Grimshaw of the architectural firm which designed the building, spoke to guests on the ground floor of the process of designing the building from the time the initial brief in 2005 through to completion and handover. He concluded: 'Our buildings are like children to us; we look after them and follow them as they grow and change.' He affirmed his belief that the building would adapt to the changing needs of the School over time.



Once the royal party returned to the ground floor, the Queen and Prince Philip had the opportunity to meet and chat with architects and contractors, governors and donors, and LSE staff and students before unveiling the plaque.

After signing the visitors' book, her Majesty was presented with George Kiloh's book on the history of the School, *A History of LSE's Buildings*, and a posy.

Once the royal party had left, there was a final surprise: a giant cake in the shape of the New Academic Building which was served to all.

Following the success of the official opening, donors were invited to take a tour of the building which concluded on the eighth floor with a lunchtime reception. Howard Davies then presented them with a token of the day; a hanging globe identical to those that form part of the artwork *Elenchus Aporia* in the atrium.



## Artists enhance the NAB

The LSE commissioned two artists to provide some innovative pieces of art for the NAB. A specially constituted group of interested parties led by Brian Smith selected Richard Wilson RA to provide an external sculpture, and Dublin born Joy Gerrard to provide the atrium piece intriguingly entitled *Elenchus Aporia* (pictured below).

The 'elenchus' is a central technique of the Socratic method which is a way of drawing out the underlying hypotheses, assumptions, or axioms, which may subconsciously shape opinion, and to make them the subject of scrutiny in order to determine their consistency with other beliefs. Most Socratic inquiries consist of a series of these elenchai to test what we think we know and typically end in aporia which is a 'state of perplexity'.

In Plato's *Meno*, Socrates describes the purgative effect of reducing a person to aporia: it shows how someone merely thought they knew something whereas, in fact, they did not, and instills in the learner a desire to investigate it. Joy explains: 'The artwork, in form and concept, contains ideas of statement, discussion, debate and the generation of new ideas. When thinking about a title for the piece, I searched for terms that would indicate these ideas. Both elenchus and aporia can have layered meanings. An elenchus can mean an argument that disproves a proposal, by proving the opposite of its conclusion, while an aporia is a proposition that is by its nature constantly in flux.'

Certainly, a spirit of inquiry and challenging what are considered

to be accepted norms are at the heart of the School's aims with both students and staff striving to truly know the causes of things, as in the School's motto: *Rerum Causas Cognoscere*

In addition, LSE plays its part in shaping the future of the social sciences and potentially – through its impact on policy makers and practitioners in the public, private and voluntary sectors – of modern civil society itself.

Planning permission for Richard Wilson's external sculpture (pictured above) is awaited. Julian Robinson enthused about the choice of Richard Wilson as the sculptor for this external design entitled *Square the Block*. As Julian said: 'This sculpture will confront expectations and challenge norms. It will be a talking point in challenging conventional wisdom. It is what the LSE is all about.'

Wilson has produced some fascinating designs and his work is characterised by architectural concerns such as volume, illusionary spaces and auditory perception. He said: 'What I actually do is tweak or undo or change the interiors of space and, in many instances, actually enlist parts of the building as part of the sculpture. In that way, I can unsettle or break people's preconceptions of space and what they think space might be.'



## Landscaping

Trees, shrubs and perennial planters, as well as bird and bat boxes, grace the eighth floor roof terrace as one of the aspects of the NAB which show the School's commitment to environmental issues which led to its excellent BREEAM rating for the building. These also contribute to making the NAB a potentially valuable ecological hub to the immediate community.

At the opening event reception, many donors, alumni and guests expressed their delight with roof terrace and its panoramic views of London. The Lord Mayor of Westminster councillor Louise Hyams said: 'I'm very pleased to see that there is a roof terrace as I think roofs are very much underused in London.'

Other landscaping features include five window boxes in the long windows overlooking Sardinia Street, providing a pleasing view for people using the lower ground floor lecture theatres, and flower boxes on the sixth floor. These help to enhance the view from these windows as the wall slightly turns up here, blocking the lower part of the window.





# A moving experience

Between 20 and 25 September, staff from the Departments of Law and Management, and the Grantham Institute for Climate Change were moved into the New Academic Building by LSE's moves and logistics manager Harry Edwards. Harry, who retired shortly after the moves following sixteen years of service, said: 'It's good to be going out with a bang.'

Staff were generally very pleased with how the move went. Victoria Grey-Edwards of the Grantham Research Institute moved into the NAB from Columbia House. She said: 'Everything was moved successfully. Harry was really helpful with anything that needed to be sorted out. The computers took quite a time to arrive so it took a while to be up and running but I'm glad to be in the building. The view from my office is fantastic. I think we're lucky to be on this side looking onto Lincoln's Inn Fields.' Staff were provided with both an occupants' guide to the building and a goody bag as the Estates Division's way of saying thank you for the co-operation during the moves.

The company who organised the moves was Edes which, this year,

was declared winner of the British Association of Removers Commercial Mover of the Year. This is the fifth time the company has won in the fifteen year history of the awards.

So how did it all go from Edes' point of view who have worked for the School for many years? Bill Tiernan, general manager at Edes, gave his comments on what made the moves a bit different from usual:

'The outline planning began over a year ago when I started work with

Harry and we made some assumptions about time frames and numbers of staff which provided us with a starting point in the planning process. As the move date approached, our window of opportunity was greatly reduced. As a result, we used a two team/two shift approach as a tool for delivering the move.

The daily tasks were divided into two with each moving team operating from different outgoing buildings and used alternative entry points into the new building. The two shift approach allowed us to transfer IT out of hours and start the packing process.

'I am delighted to say that a thank you event was organised by the School for the team on Thursday 24 September. This consisted of a drink and nibbles in the George IV pub which were very well received by our staff.

'From inception to delivery, all LSE staff were friendly and helpful. It was quite clear that people were looking forward to working in the new building.



# Impact of new teaching rooms on teaching and learning



Harvard style lecture theatre



Executive meeting room



Moot Court



Seminar room

Sixteen new teaching rooms have been introduced in the NAB on the first and second floors and four new lecture theatres on the Lower Ground floor. The Sheikh Zayed and Wolfson Theatres seat 400 and 130 and the two Harvard style lecture theatres – the Alumni and Thai – accommodate 70 and 61 respectively.



Liz Barnett (left), director of LSE's Teaching and Learning Centre, has welcomed the introduction of the new types of teaching space that the NAB has to offer. She commented: 'The New Academic Building offers some great opportunities for colleagues to

experiment with their teaching. The Harvard style lecture theatres are ideal for highly interactive, large-group events. The flexibility of furniture in seminar rooms means small groups can operate in a variety of ways. And there are many places where students can study together outside the classroom.'

If members of staff are looking for ideas on how to make the best

of these new spaces, feel free to contact Liz at: l.barnett@lse.ac.uk

The Lower Ground floor has a fantastic open space serving as a break-out area for the main lecture theatres and has a green room and cloakroom facilities. A number of staff and students have expressed appreciation for some of the smaller details as well: 'I like the sofa outside the Sheikh Zayed Theatre', said student Yolanda Ye, 'And I like the colour scheme.'

During the first weeks of term, staff and students gave their initial response to teaching and learning in the new space. Emerging from Dr Daniel Ferreira's Friday lecture on the *Incentives and Governance in Organisations* course, Kasia Kazior and Janna Ter Meer (right), two students on the International Management CEMS course, were positive about the experience of going to lectures in the building. They liked the fact that they could see the lecturer clearly, that the acoustics were excellent and they liked the design, Kasia commenting: 'There's lots of space' and Janna adding: 'I like it, it's modern.'

Dr Ferreira spoke about the new space after his lecture saying: 'I have taught in the Wolfson Theatre and in room 1.14 on the first floor. The new teaching rooms represent a major improvement which does have an impact on the learning experience, increasing student morale which is very important. My impression is that they feel the School is taking their welfare seriously.'

The new teaching rooms represent a significant increase in teaching space but not for long. As Timetables manager Linda Taylor explains:

'Before the NAB, we had 96 teaching rooms which were insufficient to timetable all the teaching for 2008/9. When the NAB teaching rooms came on stream, they provided extra and high quality teaching space which was welcome.

'However, because of Estate strategy and redevelopment works, we are due to lose around eighteen seminar rooms across the School by the end of 2009. These are mainly poor quality rooms in St Philips, St Clements and the Island Site.

'We are working closely with Estates to ensure that provision of teaching rooms across the campus continues to keep pace with requirements.'



L-r: Kasia Kazior and Janna Ter Meer



## A new direction

The NAB room numbering is in a clear format with an intuitive building code of NAB followed by the floor and the specific room number.

On the rooms themselves, you will simply see the floor and the room number. For example, 5.11 within the NAB means the fifth floor and room eleven. This is the start of a new signage and wayfinding project to make it easier for people to find their way around the campus which will come into effect next year. Further information will be available nearer the time.

