

Tour of the Bloomberg London HQ

Thursday 4 October 2018, Queen Victoria Street, London EC4

Facilitator: Stephen Masterson, recent Chair CoreNet UK Chapter programmes committee

Guides: Michael Jones, Foster + Partners
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TOUR HOSTS

Bloomberg

This was the first building visit for the UK Chapter for quite some while and a real treat - a tour round Bloomberg's exciting new European HQ.



Foster + Partners

Purpose built for one of the world's leading financial information businesses, it is located in the heart of the City, next to the Mansion House and a few steps from the Bank. It straddles Watling Street, one of London's ancient routes and covers the site of the Roman temple of Mithras, now seven metres below the current ground level. It is a multi-award winning design from Foster + Partners, created in close cooperation with Bloomberg founder and CEO Michael Bloomberg.

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Introducing the event, Stephen Masterson noted that this was his swansong as chairman of the CoreNet UK programmes committee. Michael Jones the lead designer from Fosters gave us the background to the building's design. We heard how it had been conceived to facilitate communication between staff - key to a business built on communication. How the original planning permission on the site had been for 22 storeys but that this had been cut to 10 to fit better with its local context, while still allowing for 1.1million sq ft, to accommodate up to 9,000 staff, double the current numbers. How it is the first naturally ventilated building in the City, how sustainability underpins the whole fabric, and how wellbeing is key to operations.

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We were then swiftly packed us off into two groups - 30 in each - to visit the building from top to bottom, literally. First stop up the central spiral wrap staircase to see the roof and hear how the 'chimney' effect of the staircase, wide enough to allow people to stop and talk, funnels air up through the centre of the building to the vents in the roofline.



We saw how the design incorporates natural materials, stone, wood, bronze and wool as contributing to the wellness of the staff. And we saw how the ceiling design and sound engineering cope with acoustics, so that background noise is reduced to a low hum and in lecture theatres and large meeting rooms tracking microphones follow speakers allowing them to be heard easily, dispensing with the need for hand-held microphones. We saw how the internal space is allocated in clusters or team pods and heard how these pods can be easily reconfigured to suit current tasks, and we saw one of the three television studios in action.



Then, in complete contrast, we descended to the depths to view the remains of the Roman Temple of Mithras, carefully reconstructed in a joint operation with experts from the Museum of London, displayed to 'evoke the mystery of being in the Roman temple...through haze and light'.

Two days after our visit this, Bloomberg's only purpose-built office throughout the world, won the 2018 Stirling prize as an exemplar of sustainable design. Occupying a key site in the City of London it incorporates the most modern of electronic design while respecting its surroundings. It provides the best internal working conditions for its staff, while encouraging them to take advantage of what is on offer outside the building. Truly an inspirational visit!



Alison Sutherland
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