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Name



Felix Schmid · 8 months ago

Assumptions about the working lives of people post COVID 19 must be subject to robust scrutiny, because only a limited proportion of the staff of the IMechE have the privilege of good home working arrangements, i.e., a separate work space for each home-worker, space for their families and the ability to afford heating throughout the day. There are clear H&S rules about home-working and any breach of these rules can lead to fines..

Also, the mental well-being of staff must be kept in mind when taking decisions about, effectively, enforced working from home. Staff could raise claims against the Institution, were they to suffer injury in the widest sense. I would expect Isobel Pollock-Huff's new Diversity and Inclusion Group to take a keen interest in these plans.

It must be born in mind that effective communications amongst staff and between staff and members is essential to the functioning of the Institution. Staff supporting meetings require good quality work spaces so as to allow efficient use of their time when not supporting meetings.

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IMechE → Felix Schmid · 8 months ago

Felix,

Many thanks for engaging with the proposals and providing your feedback – you have raised excellent points.

The Real Estate Strategy Group (RESG) has been working closely with staff leadership to ensure that office space provided aligns with staff wants and needs. In relation to your feedback, I liaised with the Institution's HR Director, Bims Alalade, who assured me that the Institution is not at risk of breaching employment legislation as a result of employees working from home. Furthermore, an anonymous staff work and wellbeing survey was conducted last year to assess wellbeing needs and work preferences. The results indicated a strong preference to work from home. During the times when lockdown restrictions were eased, staff were free to work from HQ, however, the majority chose to work from home. Increased costs arising from working from home have been offset by the savings made where staff are not commuting into London. Staff can also claim a tax relief allowance from the government when working from home has not been their choice or defined in their contract.

To reassure you, those who want to regularly work at HQ will still be given that opportunity. Providing staff with good quality space (which they do not have currently) is one of the drivers for this project.

The Institution does provide generous wellbeing benefits and initiatives in addition to consultation with staff. It will bolster its current efforts to safeguard mental health by training more mental health first-aiders and providing more information resources where available. It is also worth noting that as a Trustee on the Diversity and Inclusion group, I have been liaising regularly between both groups, especially around accessibility in all its forms.

Your comments around communication are valid, I understand that the facilities department have ensured that adequate workspace is available when staff work from the office to ensure they can effectively support members. Concerning the proposals focused on the building, staff will receive regular communication updates to ensure they are involved in the consultation about the building and their work environment. Employee surveys have shown that staff are comfortable talking to their managers, their employment engagement representative, and the HR department regarding any concerns they have. We are confident that staff will not feel pressured to respond to a particular issue under duress.

I hope the above reassures you that the Institution is taking every care to look after its staff and will continue to do so wherever their working location and that the proposals have been developed with requirements of both members and staff in mind.

Helena Rivers

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Neil Cooper · 7 months ago

From my experience of attending AD Board meetings at HQ, including being "bumped" to an off-site location because of overbooking at HQ, I welcome the increased use of virtual meetings as a result of IMechE investment in MS Teams etc. The travel to and from HQ by train and Underground was not at all enjoyable after the initial novelty. As for staff support, I have not experienced any decline in that respect and, through virtual meetings and e-mails regarding the piloting of MS Teams to conduct Professional Review interviews, and to roll out Teams to the Regions, I have engaged more with HQ staff than before.

I appreciate that some staff may not have adequate facilities at home, but they can have the option to come in to the office - which may be a small local centre.

In my opinion, the increasing availability of higher-speed internet connections means the concept of a large city centre office is on the way out and Covid-19 has only served to accelerate that trend. I can understand the desire to have a "Prestige" London location to act as a physical meeting point, but I can only applaud the IMechE's efforts to make working from home or other locations a strategy. In that respect, I note that the Finance function is now based in Sheffield, and years ago there was a Birmingham office that supported Regional activities. I hope that the Institution will investigate the idea of regional support hubs as the de-centralising strategy evolves..

Regards

Neil Cooper Neil.Cooper@member.imeche.org

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IMechE → Neil Cooper · 7 months ago

Dear Neil,

Many thanks for your comments and your positive feedback regarding the staff support that you have recently received. I will ensure this feedback is passed on.

With regards to your comment on regional support, we agree that the transition to remote working has enabled more equity in support to all regions, both in the UK and Internationally. As you suggest, we will look to build on this as we move forwards.

Helena Rivers

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Jonathan Franklin → Neil Cooper · 7 months ago

Hi Neil

I completely agree with you. How many regional hubs could we support with this money?

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Jonathan Franklin · 7 months ago

I think as a so-called "forward-looking" organisation the IMechE should be seriously considering whether we need any buildings in order to carry out the function of the institution, let alone very old buildings in the centre of London.

I would estimate that maybe 2% of the members of the IMechE have ever been to Birdcage Walk, so what is its function? Surely we don't actually need it. We already have an admin office in Bury St Edmunds, we could have other low-cost offices in other parts of the country if we need them.

I think it is typical of the out-dated approach that the IMechE takes to life that the starting assumption has been that we need to maintain an old decrepit building - is it a metaphor for the institution?

Before the IMechE spends even more of our members' money on design work a vote should be had by the members to decide what is actually needed.

Jonathan Franklin

FI MechE

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IMechE → Jonathan Franklin · 6 months ago

Dear Jonathan,

Thank you for your feedback and my apologies for a slight delay in my response. Your comments on the project are really welcomed and I have shared them with the team. I have been really surprised by the strength of feeling from many members who have never been to nor anticipate ever going to Birdcage Walk that the building is very important to them. There is a great deal of prestige brought to the Institution from our address, especially for our International Members.

On the subject of a vote, yes we are intending to hold a full member vote this summer however we need to do some work to be able to present viable options to members. That does include some design development, albeit to date we have spent very little on design. As with so much within the Institution most of the work in progressing these proposals is being carried out by our volunteers.

We will continue to keep the dedicated webpage up to date with activities and key dates, including the vote as soon as a date is set.

Helena Rivers

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Jonathan Franklin → IMechE · 6 months ago

Thanks for the response, can you confirm that when the vote is held one of the options will be to sell 1BW and 3BW.

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IMechE → Jonathan Franklin · 6 months ago

Dear Jonathan,

Thank you for your feedback. We are not planning to ballot members on selling the building. We have already done a sample survey and it was clear that it was not a preferred option. We have therefore focused our attention on options which allow us to retain the asset for future generations of engineers. The ballot will be a 'yes/no' based on the prime option at the time of the ballot (after considering feedback we have received and learnings from our feasibility work.) If we were to get a 'No' result we will then of course consider other options.

Helena Rivers

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Jonathan Franklin → IMechE · 6 months ago

Thanks Helena, but the sample survey seems to have only included people that regularly use 1BCW so I don't think it is in any way representative of the members. I am very worried that this project is being rushed through based on the assumption that we must keep 1BCW and I would agree with other comments that we should be taking a much more strategic look at this, including using premises of other engineering institutions.

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IMechE → Jonathan Franklin · 5 months ago

Dear Jonathan,

If we were a business I would agree with you that a more radical change in our mode of operation would be appropriate, however we are a member based charity and having a physical home for the charity is important for members to interact with other members and IMechE staff. The building and address engenders a great deal of pride for many of our members, including our more remote international members. I do not agree that this project is being rushed as it has been in development since late 2019.

I do agree that there is great opportunity in better sharing our built assets with the other PEI's and potentially other membership organisations, and it is planned within the workstream to investigate this further.

Thanks for engaging with the project,

Helena

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John Butler · 7 months ago

Thank you for the open sharing of the plans for the future of the IMechE building. I hope that many members are able to get involved in this and have an input.

Concerning the question of whether we should keep the building as highlighted by Jonathan Franklin, I see that you have already undertaken a review of volunteer members and have an "overwhelming" majority to retain the current building. I am not certain that having a survey of the complete membership would be beneficial to the Institution. I have often heard it said "what do I get from the Institution" but I believe a more important question is "what can I do for the Institution". We are professional engineers and as such we should be promoting individually the future of engineering - particularly for young people. If the majority of those who actively work towards the future of engineering want to retain the building that is a good measure.

I have used 1BCW on very many occasions for meetings, training, lectures, and general reference (I am not located in London - being Midlands based). The facilities are generally good and well received by the many visitors I have spoken with at meetings. My one complaint would be the exorbitant cost of refreshments when organising meetings. I hope with the new plans for extended catering, you will bring this in-house and reduce costs.

I have campaigned for many years to have a single "Institution of Engineering" but as that is not likely to happen in the near future then I fully support an excellent centre, well located for the IMechE. I have looked around the newly refurbished IET HQ and this is something along the lines of what is being considered for the future of 1BCW. I consider this works.

One concern I have is that some years ago I learnt that the usable internal occupancy percentage of the current building is somewhere in the 70s compared with a modern building of around 95. This mainly due to wall thicknesses, layout, etc. Will this major refurbishment allow this to change? I just hope I am still around to see the new building.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Stephen Back · 7 months ago

In the Q&A you mention 2 surveys - both of which are fundamental, and neither of which I have heard of. The questions are - 1) do we need a London HQ, should we move to a location in the country?; and 2) should we co-locate with another PEI? These issues should be put to a vote of all members.

The other obvious option is the outright sale of 3 Birdcage Walk. Has this been considered? This would provide funds to maintain No.1 for many years and re-pay any outstanding debts.

The Project seems to have gathered a momentum of its own without a proper strategic review of the options.

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Felix Schmid → Stephen Back · 7 months ago

Thank you for this comment Stephen. I agree about the impression of a 'momentum of its own'. I have just looked at the update from the Real Estate Strategy Group and I was interested to find that Willmott Dixon have been retained to develop a concept design for 1BCW. The document produced by Willmott Dixon is impressive but it gives the appearance of decisions having been taken already.

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IMechE → Felix Schmid · 6 months ago

Felix, many thanks for your comments and apologies for the time it has taken to respond. We have been busy on a number of fronts and that has slowed our response time to the many queries we have had on the building. As with any project like this it proves difficult to know when to engage with our members. Too soon and there is nothing of weight to consult on, too late and it can leave members feeling like decisions have already been made. The members are obviously of great importance to the Institution, and therefore no decision will be made without a member vote.

As you mention, we are currently working with Willmott Dixon who are helping to create some design concepts for us. The Real Estate Strategy Group has made a proposal and is working to provide vision and cost plans around those proposals to inform membership prior to taking a vote. This current period of consultation is to inform RESG so that the proposals can be refined. I hope this provides you with some comfort that a direction has not yet been decided upon.

Helena Rivers

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IMechE → Stephen Back · 6 months ago

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your feedback. The surveys which have been undertaken to date are of the most active member groups: Past Presidents, Council, Young Members Board and the Trustee Board.

The Real Estate Strategy Group was set up about 18 months ago and has been reviewing the strategy of the building; it's purpose, it's function, it's flexibility, it's benefits etc, in order to develop a strategy. It is from that in depth review that the recommended option has been developed (alongside other options), including the outright sale of No. 3.

Helena Rivers

Malcolm Dobell → IMechE · 6 months ago

You have championed the output of the survey, and yet we thought it was groups to a group numbering circa 100 people. What about all the other divisions and groups that routinely use 1 BCW? If I'd been asked the question "would you spend tens of millions of pounds on a heritage building, I would have said no, very firmly. Old buildings generally only reveal the full horror of what needs to be done after work has commenced. There is a great example just down the road in the parliament building

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IMechE → Malcolm Dobell · 6 months ago

Dear Malcolm,

Thank you for your feedback. You are quite right in stating that we have many other active groups in addition to those who I've previously mentioned. The prime purpose of the consultation exercise we are now conducting through our webpage and our other recent communications is to raise awareness across the whole institution and stimulate discussion - therefore your comments are welcomed. We do have mitigation measures being developed to consider the issue you raise of unforeseen issues and we are planning to show the risk register, which will include this, on the webpage when it is completed, so you can see the considerations that have been made.

Helena Rivers

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Theo Roberts · 7 months ago

I support fully the plans described to secure the future of One Birdcage Walk.

The use of a long term lease of Three Birdcage Walk seems a sensible way to help finance the necessary re-furbishment of the building while ensuring that ultimate ownership remains with IMechE.

I would hope that the profile of One Birdcage Walk can be progressively raised both to highlight our heritage and to publicise the vital role that Mechanical Engineering must play as we face the many challenges of the 21st Century.

The unique ability of this prestigious building to champion the cause of Mechanical Engineering and to inspire future generations to join the profession needs to be exploited to its full potential.

Let us hope that the current plans will enable One Birdcage Walk to obtain a secure future as the spiritual home of Mechanical Engineering through the 21st Century and well beyond!

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Edward · 7 months ago

I love this headquarters, and it makes me proud of the history of our institution. The heritage areas look excellent, but I'm not so sure about some of the other designs... I think they detract from the awe.

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 Edward · 6 months ago

Hi Edward,

Thanks for your feedback. Most of the areas you see will be subject to the 'heritage' treatment, the more modern space will make up the staff areas (which don't benefit currently from the same heritage features). I'd be keen to understand your feedback in more detail. Did you have views on the look and feel of the corridors or lecture theatre, for example? This would be really helpful information to understand at this stage.

Helena Rivers



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Hans Butler · 7 months ago

Have we made sufficient provision for showing visitors to the building the "heritage" aspects of the building - or is it really only the exterior which has "heritage" merit?

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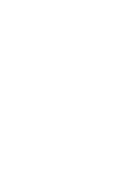
 IMechE  → Hans Butler · 6 months ago

Dear Hans,

Thank you for your question, it is a really interesting point. The heritage is really important to us and we do want to make sure it is not lost or compromised in the process of refurbishment. We are looking to preserve the heritage aspects of the building within all member spaces while also enhancing the spaces by showcasing our engineering assets, displaying the best of mechanical engineering and innovation. In conservation officer terms there is little in the building of 'merit' however we will be preserving the heritage within.

Helena Rivers

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Phil · 7 months ago

I think the plans for the IMechE HQ seem entirely sensible, my only request/suggestion would be that as much as possible is done to make space on the roof that members (and their guests) could enjoy. Perhaps there could be an option to turn the roof into a cafe/bar that could be open to the public, it could be used to share the work of the IMechE but also to generate revenue for the ongoing maintenance of the building. I expect there are some particularly impressive views from up there.

Thanks, Phil

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Gerald · 7 months ago

Loving the transparency in this major decision making:

- only one valuation ?
- How did Wilmot Dixon get the work for the concept design? Any other firms offering different/alternative concepts?

- Sounds like a major project, with plenty of high-value contracts going out? What steps are we putting in place to ensure all of these are fully transparent, arms length tendering so we don't fall foul of history again so soon?

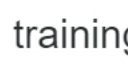

From the FAQ:

"How much do you expect to receive from the long-term lease of 3 BCW?

A Red Book evaluation, an assessment by a leading independent property agent, has been undertaken and indicates that the proceeds from a long leasehold deal for 3 BCW will completely cover the full refurbishment costs of 1BCW and possibly create a surplus."

(Please, spare us the numbers, its not like we're engineers...)

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 IMechE  → Gerald · 6 months ago

Gerald, thank you for your comments - I will do my best to address them all.

We have to date received three valuations of the building with varying degrees of detail. Wilmot Dixon presented a very competitive offer for the concept design, and was selected over other firms who also presented proposals. We are not developing designs with alternative providers as this seems counter-intuitive to the Group. We need to ensure that we are giving the correct direction to ensure we achieve the right outcome from our designers.


This is obviously a major project and when we reach the stage of letting, each element will be undertaking competitive tendering with both quality and commercial evaluation.

As engineers we are always hungry for numbers, but as the extent of the works and the feasibility assessments are still ongoing we do not have accurate figures so have made the decision to provide none. When we are in a position to provide numbers we are satisfied are robust, we will of course share them on the website.

Helena Rivers

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IMechE  · 7 months ago

Dear Members, thank you for your valuable feedback on this project. We want to reassure you that all comments and questions have been passed to the Real Estate Strategy Group for their consideration, and will be responded to on this page as soon as possible. We appreciate your support and encourage you to continue the conversation. Helena Rivers



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Matt · 7 months ago

From the comments below it seems 50/50 that members are in favour of even retaining the old building. Its the Institution that is important not the bricks and mortar. I would argue that the vast majority of members have never and will never visit those hallowed halls. I love history, but are we learning from it? I would also note that I don't recall any formal consultation with the members. What does our new chief exec have to say on the matter? Is the IMechE relevance defined by offering F2F training and meeting space at 1birdcage? I've visited twice. Member for 25yrs....don't live in London.

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 IMechE  → Matt · 6 months ago

Hi Matt,

The consultation prior to the launch of this web page and recent publications has only been with our most active membership - Past Presidents, Council, Young Members Board and the Trustee Board. This current engagement exercise is to draw out exactly the type of feedback you have offered - so thank you for contributing.

Helena Rivers

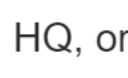

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Howard Parkinson · 6 months ago · edited

Somewhere nearer the geographical centre of the country would be better and cheaper (to rent and to get to). Birmingham or Manchester. Also, with HS2 we have the opportunity to de-centralise things out of London.

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 IMechE  → Howard Parkinson · 6 months ago

Dear Howard,

Thank you for your feedback. We have considered the option of moving out of London, and have found that the main disadvantages are:

- 1) We lose our heritage building
- 2) We lose our opportunity to influence parliament (while also recognising we could have done more in recent years and we have ambition to do so)
- 3) Less accessible for our International members
- 4) Our staff are all based in/surrounding London resulting in major relocation costs and risks in staff retention

Also in discussion was the fact that London is most accessible from all parts of the country by public transport.

Thanks again for your feedback.

Helena Rivers

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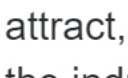



Ralph Melhuish · 6 months ago

Dear Helena

I find the chat below quite interesting. Inevitably, some opinions appear quite polarised, but I was taken by your response to a question from Stephen Beck. You state 'The surveys which have been undertaken to date are of the most active member groups: Past Presidents, Council, Young Members Board and the Trustee Board.' Not wanting to sound protective, but inevitably opening myself up to that criticism, you have possibly missed the most active member group, a group without which the Institution would not be able to undertake its learned society activity. I chair the QMB and under the umbrella of the QMB we have some 1200 or so volunteer members actively generating considerable revenue for the Institution sustaining both its membership and reputation. Many of them interact with HQ, or the systems HQ run, on a daily basis. This is a constituency I would suggest you should take time to engage with at the earliest opportunity.

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 IMechE  → Ralph Melhuish · 6 months ago

Hi Ralph,

Thanks ever so much for your comments. You are quite right in stating that we have many other active groups in addition to those you I've previously mentioned. In response to your request that we reach out to QMB and other groups - this is exactly the purpose of this webpage and our recent communication. The web page has all the current information that we have available to date. I wholeheartedly encourage QMB to provide their feedback and ask that you encourage them to do so also.

Thanks again.

Helena Rivers

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Tom · 6 months ago

Dear Helena,

Thank-you for the work you are doing on this scheme. I firmly support the proposal to retain 1BCW and to let 3BCW on a long lease to fund the refurbishment. 1BCW and 3BCW are substantial assets for the institution, so making part of the estate generate an income for us whilst we retain overall ownership would seem to be a good long term plan (as opposed to completely selling off the family silver for short-term gain). For a learned society with a long history such as ours, I personally see a lot of value in having a prestigious and historical London HQ so close to the seat of government.

In terms of the refurbishment itself, I would like this to be a heritage led restoration that respects the history of the institution, the period features and fabric of the building whilst modernising the building services in the background. I would not like to see parts of the building overly modernised to resemble the interior of a minimalist boutique hotel.

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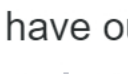

Ian Aplin · 6 months ago

Hi, thankyou for the opportunity to see the plans and be involved in the discussion. I will be going on gut feeling, having been an IMechE member for many years, but, only visiting HQ twice when I was at University in Brunel.

1. Each time I am in London I am proud to walk past 1 Birdcage Walk. I would like that to continue. It is our Heritage and history that brings that feeling to me. Engineers built and continue to build our Country and London is a core of that.
2. I would like to feel more comfortable to bring my family or friends inside... (I walk past). Perhaps if there is a heritage visitor area and then a members area we would all feel confident to step in.
3. Sorry, but the design brief from Wilmot Dixon is really not good. When I step into HQ I want to feel proud as a mechanical engineer both due to our heritage and future. The concept must be all around that... It is all over the place, we spend big money on all of the conceptual words etc... But they do not pick the core of what we are and stand for. Certainly sustainability is important, but, in our context as Mechanical Engineers. I really hope it has evolved considerably and my fellow Mechanical Engineers are aligned. I would not proceed with what was presented.. For example, holograms are very visually attract, they can show many engineering innovations, concepts.... All the way from Roman Engineers, the industrial revolution, aerospace and how are mechanical engineers involved in the future space travel to Mars. I would want any visitor entering to want to become a mechanical engineer because of our impact, like how I feel now.
4. Smart working, certainly needs to be challenged, I would take time with this as we are all working out the meaning. I have been smart working, but, now I am back in the office four days per week. I need to feel in 'our place' as part of our team. An option could be to find an additional location, in a historically important location for engineers... Maclaren, Imperial College, Bristol ??? I believe the main challenge is how we adapt our work situations to allow both to work together. At the moment all people on Teams works, all people in a meeting room works, but, a mix is difficult. Those on teams struggle to engage with the meeting based people... I would not jump to conclusions straight away. If office based working is not so important then why would you be able to rent our 3 Birdcage Walk.

Love to hear your reply and exciting development.

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 IMechE  → Ian Aplin · 5 months ago

Dear Ian,

Many thanks for taking time to provide your feedback. I hope that this project will encourage you to visit the building more often. I will try to structure my response to match your questions:

2. The draft plans include informal space where you can bring family and friends to the building. This area will include exhibits of some of our engineering heritage items, as well as some of the latest engineering developments. The layouts are still very much in development but we hope that this will encourage more people to visit and to relate to the institution when inside. This is in addition to the proposed members lounge.

3. The stylised images within the concept design are to show the sort of feel we could achieve in different spaces. They are certainly not intended to represent final looks. There is, for example, zero IMechE branding to these images and lack of engineering showcasing. This is because they are from real world examples. Our detailed design (when we get there) will be focused on demonstrating engineering excellence. For example, one idea we have had is to widen the entrance so we could showcase a formula student car. It's all a work in progress at this stage, but I think we are progressing along the lines you hoping - please do correct me if I've misunderstood.

4. The nature of work the staff team undertake has meant that the office has never been 100% utilised. Even when all staff were expected to be in the building, many would be out seeing members or supporting events. Staff feedback since the pandemic has been mixed, with some keen to continue home working and others keen to be back in the office. The beauty of the proposed multifunctionality of the building is that space can flex. Rooms which are used by members and events can also be used by staff when needed i.e an all staff meeting day.

There is clearly the need for office space where staff can come together, but reducing that space is in line with current cross-sector practice.

I do hope this has helped answer some of your queries and thanks again for engaging with the project.

Helena Rivers

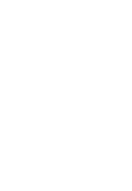
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Paul Mascarenas · 5 months ago

Excellent proposal, thanks for sharing details with the members. So many memories of visits to 1 Birdcage Walk so good to see leadership working to ensure its future, providing a modern and contemporary environment for both members and staff, while maintaining the historic context of the building.

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Richard McClean · 5 months ago

It appears from the design and specification outlines that a key part of the project concept is a significant increase in the catering facilities at 1BCW - presumably to support large scale external commercial events. What work has been done to size the available market for this type of event, determine what the requirements of this market are and to confirm the financial viability of this type of activity for the Institution please?

For the Institution to become a player in this highly competitive market with all the uncertainties of the post-COVID world feels like a material move away from the Institution's core aim of improving the world through engineering. While it does make sense to seek to support the Institution's finances through commercial ventures, our experience in this sort of area to date has shown that the risks have outweighed the benefits and the net effect has been negative financially and reputationally.

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Richard McClean · 5 months ago

Securing the future of 1 Birdcage Walk is a responsibility we have as the current custodian of this iconic structure. It is also our responsibility as a professional Institution to ensure that we have the facilities and capabilities needed to support our Members and to fulfil our mission to improve the world through engineering.

It feels important that the Real Estate Strategy Group progress their work with these two key aims in mind.

However, when I look at the materials provided to date on this project, I am not getting a clear picture of the aim and objectives being addressed nor do I see a statement of the remit of the various parties involved.

I am therefore surprised to see such an amount of detailed work being undertaken on concept designs when I am unclear on what outcome those designs are intending to support. The strategic objectives listed in the concept design paper are those of the Institution not those of the project. The closest we get to a design objective is one that talks to the sustainability of the building itself - this overlooks that the building exists for a purpose.

For example, a key function that 1 Birdcage Walk was constructed to deliver was to provide space for Members to progress their activities together and with key stakeholders. Notwithstanding the embedding in society of digital technologies to support such activities, the human need to meet in person will undoubtedly remain. This aspect of 1BCW purpose has been undermined in recent years by the necessity to generate income to support the functioning of the Institution given the financial setbacks we have suffered. I am therefore unclear where this issue sits in the stated list of project priorities.

It appears from the design and specification outlines that a key part of the project concept is a significant increase in the catering facilities at 1 Birdcage Walk - presumably to support large scale external commercial events. What work has been done to size the available market for this type of event, determine what the requirements of this market are and to confirm the financial viability of this type of activity for the Institution please?

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Clearly I am coming late to the party here as I have not previously been offered the opportunity to input.

I would hope that Member engagement is significantly improved going forward and I would be happy to provide any support I can.

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IMEchE  → Richard McClean · 5 months ago · edited

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your support in our ambition to preserve the building for future generations of mechanical engineers.

The working group has based its discussion on the same premise as you, that is that the building should be first and foremost a facility for use by members and a base for the Institution's staff. However, we also recognise that the building should not be a burden on the charity. We are obliged to use our assets to best effect for the charity and that is not achieved when rooms are sat empty except when members want to use them. Hiring out rooms on an ad-hoc basis when they are not required by members enables a really flexible solution to create revenue and also enable membership usage of space when needed.

With regards to the concept design work undertaken, I'm sure you recognise that we are unable to present solutions without first undertaking some level of design and developing a cost plan against that design in order to understand affordability. We hope to have some indicative layouts to present in June which speak to your desire to ensure that members are given more flexible space. In addition to the working space we currently enjoy within the library, we are looking to introduce informal meeting areas for members.

The number of 120 covers for catering facilities is based on the anticipated capacity of the proposed lecture theatre with the introduction of retractable seating. This is to enable us to match our catering facilities with lecture theatre capacity and make the building more attractive for evening use, whether by the Institution or external organisations. I do apologise if you feel we should have begun consultation earlier. We have consulted with Council, and I hope you can appreciate it is difficult to know when to start more extensive consultation and to find the right balance between being able to provide information and respond to queries, and also then being able to adapt proposals based on this feedback.

I hope this information helps to address your points and I look forward to your continued engagement and feedback.

Thanks again,  
Helena

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Alexander Quayle · 4 months ago

I certainly support the principle of maintaining 1 BCW for the IMechE's use. What I could not discern from the plans, though, was how the building becomes a real Hub for members. The IOD is a good example of how this can work. In my view, it should be a natural stopping point for members whenever they transition through london. There should be meeting space and refreshment available close to the entrance, with plenty of places to get together and form short discussions. These facilities should be plentiful and close to the entrance, such that negotiating 2-3 flights of stairs is not needed to have a coffee and a short discussion. We will move to a post covid world and the building should be fit for the next 100 years of engineering, and be focused around bringing members together, rather than creating large atriums with empty space (I am not sure if this is the intention, but some of the concepts presented seem to suggest so). I hope this feedback is helpful and would be pleased to review more detailed layouts, if available. I would also be in sheer delight if the IMechE provided a true member's hub, a space to perhaps refresh and take a shower, change for a meeting or similar.

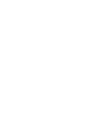
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Geoffrey Beresford Hartwell · 3 months ago · edited

It is perhaps a minor matter but I have in front of me now a copy of a print I had when I joined the Institution over half a century ago. It is of the armorial bearings of the Institution, supported by Vulcan and Archimedes. The original is or was on an oak panel in the Council Room. As I am now disabled and unlikely to visit Birdcage Walk, I would like to feel that it was preserved and restored if necessary.

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IMEchE  → Geoffrey Beresford Hartwell · a month ago

Hi Geoffrey,

Firstly let me start by apologising for my late response to your email. Many of us are still working remotely so tracking down the information within the staff team took a bit longer than expected. However, it has resulted in good news – I have been told by our facilities team that the image is still hung in the Council Room. If you email digital@IMEchE.org we would be happy to take some photos to send you via email?

Kind Regards,  
IMEchE Digital Team

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