



Touchdown

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‘This facility is all about culture and performance. We weren’t looking for something that was purely functional. We didn’t want something that was just typical. This is about projecting our brand and values to customers and staff alike.’

We’re visiting E.ON’s Enfield power station, talking with plant manager Paul Morton. The vision comes across with clarity and businesslike purpose, as Paul explains the lateral thinking behind the investment in an intelligently designed facility.

E.ON is a major company by any yardstick, and its energy business is in the frontline of the way we live. The German based multinational employs about 18,000 in the UK, with the Generation business unit staff numbers contributing some 2,500 of the total headcount. E.ON generates about 10% of the UK’s electricity through a diverse portfolio of coal, gas, and oil-fired power ▶▶▶▶▶▶





▶▶▶ stations using some of the most advanced technologies in the world, and is also a leader in renewable generation. The Enfield power station is one of these sites, and is a Combined Cycle Gas Turbine design – ‘as good as it gets’, according to Paul. Feeding the National Grid, Enfield is one element of the ‘liquid energy market’ operated in this country, where energy is traded every half hour on commodities exchanges.

Generation is just one part of the overall E.ON business: retail, distribution and energy services forming other key divisions of this large corporation. As one would expect, there’s been significant investment in the E.ON brand and culture to go along with the huge capital outlay. The company has grown rapidly in recent years during a

consolidation period for Europe’s energy industry. A major element of the strategy has been a drive towards integration – in terms of brand recognition both internally and externally.

What’s fascinating about Enfield is that it’s a microcosm of the E.ON culture. Despite employing a total of only 28 people, in many ways Enfield is a flagship facility. This is a place which says a lot about E.ON, its attitude to its staff, its customers and its role in wider society.

One of the unique challenges for Paul Morton was that, unusually, the power station was acquired rather than built by E.ON. This created its own special set of conditions, as Paul explains. ‘We bought Enfield as a built asset – originally it had

been built by a consortium of American power companies. Recognising the opportunities when the UK energy market was liberalised, their idea was to build a fleet of lean team stations, operationally focused with administration centralised elsewhere. For various reasons, having built Enfield, the Americans didn’t follow through with their strategy and pulled out. One legacy was the office block they leased half a mile away to house the management and engineering staff. It was not a good idea – there was no link between management and site. In particular, it was difficult to drive performance, but generally there was a barrier to communication. On top of that, the office block was of a poor standard which made staff feel undervalued and visitors unimpressed.

‘What we saw we needed was an administration facility on site to maximise the team performance and to project our culture. In addition, there had previously been a heavy reliance on the contractor who had built the plant – we now wanted to manage our own engineering risks.

‘The whole objective was to make this an E.ON site – Enfield had been fiercely independent because of its previous one site, one unit status. Making Enfield an E.ON site is about making staff feel they are part of E.ON, not just Enfield. The look, the feel, the attitude are now all E.ON. There had never been much investment in this place before, but E.ON has spent a considerable amount on plant and facilities. For example, we’ve increased the plant’s output capacity by 32MW, expanded the car park to 10 times its original size, installed waste management facilities and built storage areas to support the strategy.

‘As for the administration block itself, the most important thing of all is that, apart from the two operators, everyone works together about 20ft from the plant.

Normally in power stations there’s a bit of a cultural split between the operators and the engineers because of their different driving forces. Operators have a short term focus, looking for best performance. The engineers, on the other hand, are looking for long term enhancement. It’s essential that the two teams work together, and physical distance is typically an issue. With the new facility they now sit together – in fact casual conversations are more likely to fix a problem than a formal meeting.

‘We’ve also made management visible to everyone. Previously I had ‘visitors’ – now it’s open door. In a shared working office,▶▶▶▶▶▶

case study



we're a good neighbour. There's more noise coming from the motorway!

'The meeting rooms are fitted with the latest technology for video conferencing and computer training and this helps reduce travel requirements. But it's the touchdown bar which perhaps makes the most difference culturally. As I said, this is a lean team, so we depend on central support. Previously, Enfield hadn't done a good job of integrating those people when they visited – and the result was poor support. Now, they are fully integrated with our staff, it's attractive for them to visit. As a result our business partners want to come here – thereby making everyone feel part of the same E.ON culture. These feelings are reinforced by subtle graphics throughout, reinforcing the company values.

'Once all these issues and influences were clear, I could see that an ordinary building based on cheapest bid would not work. We had to furnish the block carefully with an eye on something more than merely functional. This wasn't going to be typical from the point of view of our brand, our image, our visitors and our staff. We had three bidders – EFG's plans, visuals and options caught my attention. Although EFG were three times the price of their competitors they were worth every penny because they listened and put the time in.

'We've had a great response. People say 'wow', its modern and airy – and it's not what they were used to. The investment proves to staff what E.ON's about, it's a statement of E.ON standards – and it's making a clear difference to our business ●



▶▶▶▶ it's now ideal for everyone to just walk in to discuss issues.

'Our geographical location in north London is advantageous. Here at the junction of the A10 and M25 we are seen as a really central location, often it is more

convenient than our Coventry head office. There are all sorts of meetings held here for senior management, national press being briefed by our CEO, politicians – what they see is a modern well maintained site. From the outside there's not a lot to see either –

essential ingredients

Client:	• E.ON
Design & Fit-out:	• Kingspan
Main Contractor:	• Carillion
Systems Furniture:	• EFG 01925 715300
Carpets:	• Bonar Floors 01384 877333
Vinyl Flooring:	• Altro 01462 707600
Glazed Partitioning:	• ei2 020 7422 8220
Meeting Tables:	• ABF 01423 358110
Specialist Joinery:	• Nethercoats 01422 367604
Blinds:	• Silent Gliss 01843 863571