

Annes' Diamond

It's not easy to circumnavigate our spiritual home city, Manchester. Well, it's not that difficult to physically navigate around it, it's just that we a little strange having to by-pass family, friends and favourite haunts.



Case Study

There is, however, a very good reason why we are ignoring Manchester – at least for the time being. We have a short 50 or so mile extension to our normal journey as we head out to Lytham St Annes, and in particular the recently remodeled and regenerated Aegon UK facility.

Aegon is the leading pensions, investments, protection and financial advice company, with headquarters in Edinburgh. The organisation boasts over two million customers, around 4,450 employees and, as of March this year, an incredible £53.6 billion in assets under management,

including all revenue-generating investments.

Lytham may only be a pebble's throw from the illuminations, amusements, beaches and famous tower in Blackpool, yet it couldn't be a more different kind of town. Genteel, pretty and ever-so-slightly reserved, >>>



Case Study



been there. The meeting 'pods' feature a series of images of local landmarks taken by a photographer we brought in through the architect. We put it out to the staff to choose which images they want for their meeting areas.

We move up to take a look at the open plan office areas which dominate the four of the vast floors here. Each of the floorplates is extremely large in itself, with great natural light flooding in. The clean, crisp Sedus furniture is teamed with smart, complementary KI storage, whilst the green seating fabric and desktop screens add just a touch of vibrancy and colour. The only enclosed areas here are for utilities.

'We've rationalised how the printers are used here – creation of printer hubs eliminates most of the noise and provides space for cartridges, stationary and mailpoints, so everything is enclosed,' Alan explains. 'We now have a much improved storage capacity by means of using a mixture of static cabinets and electronic mobile racking, both in terms of personal storage and in centralised filing. We've really changed the culture of how, what and why we store.'

And, before we know it, we're back at reception. We ask Alan to sum up the project for us. 'All those involved worked well together – and worked hard,' Alan smiles. 'We introduced an architect to bring in a fresh pair of eyes and, together with the project managers and the fit-out contractors, the end result is pretty good! We're now just three weeks away from absolute completion and we're on schedule – not bad for a year-long project.'

'Everyone really has worked together. I'm not going to say that there weren't any niggles – of course there were, but you're always going to get a few with a building of this size while keeping the office live and with so many people to consider.'

'Lytham is the biggest building we have outside Edinburgh, so it's only fitting that we brought this in line. It really is a pleasure to come down here and see this now.'

We head back to the car and, indeed, back to the Mix Mecca of Manchester – or do we have time for a quick candy-floss and donkey ride? Manchester it is ●

»»»brought the manufacturers in to help answer any questions which might arise.'

Procurement was a major issue here of course, and Alan is keen to give praise where it's due. 'The process was quite easy, to tell the truth. We'd used Sedus chairs for our Edinburgh head office – and they had delivered those fantastically well, 100%+. We then looked to increase the density of the desking in Edinburgh and Sedus came to us once again. We looked at them and knew that they could deliver an entire package, with the desking and the seating all marrying up. They came back to us with a fantastic offer for Edinburgh and we decided that this would become our standard.'

By doing so, has made things so much easier in terms of both the service we receive – they took care of the entire sourcing of product – and also in terms of our own flexibility. That consistency is so important when it comes to being reactive for change and churn. They were superb.

'We were keen to provide the staff with elements to improve their workspace and how they work. We have invested in brand new fully compliant seating, in fully adjustable monitor arms, and we have also invested in the front reception area, with new reception desk, new meeting rooms at

the side, and then we have created a new client facing suite out of what was essentially a corridor. Now have six high-end spaces with high-end elements and technology where the post room used to stand.'

The look and the feel of the fully glazed client suite is far more boutique hotel than corporate working space, with subtle shades and tones used throughout, and beautiful furniture and lighting elements adding to the luxurious feel.

As we walk through the ground floor of the space Alan tells us how the Dutch parent company didn't set any corporate guidelines or standards for the scheme, although Aegon UK has, as we have discovered, now set itself a standard throughout its open plan working areas, whilst many other areas also follow a new 'Aegon look and feel'.

'The restaurant itself is also a new concept for us. This is a world away from the old 'restaurant' and coffee points we had. The Lytham site certainly didn't have any of the Starbucks or patisserie element that we now have here. At first the staff looked as if they were almost scared to use this space, as well as the meeting rooms and breakout areas, but now they've really started to grow in to them and use them as if they've always

essential ingredients

Client • **Aegon UK** | Architects • **Smith Scott Mullan** www.smith-scott-mullan.co.uk

Main Contractor • **Morris & Spottiswood** | Project Manager • **Thomas & Adamson** | Furniture Install/ Move Mangement • **Europa Workspace**

Systems Furniture & Task Seating • **Sedus** www.sedus.com

Storage • **KI** www.europe.ki.com

Breakout & Meeting Furniture • **Senator** www.senator.co.uk

Allermuir www.allermuir.com **Hitch Mylius** www.hitchmylius.co.uk