



“We valued working with a small company, because, as a small institution, we wanted the personal touch.”



Matt Nicholl, Head of Estates at the Royal College of Music, shares his experience of LUPC’s Estates Maintenance Services agreement.

“In December 2011, the Royal College of Music decided we wouldn’t renew a lease with Heythrop College on offices in Kensington Square. Instead, we planned to relocate four departments to our main campus in Prince Consort Road. To achieve this change we had to move a further 20 offices at our main campus in order to make room, and at the same time retain all existing teaching and practice space.

It was good timing that LUPC’s Estates Maintenance Service agreement had recently been launched and we decided to run a tender under the Fabric Maintenance lot (Lot 1). The tender ran smoothly and Sykes & Son was awarded a one-year contract for the work.

Our priorities for the contract were a dedicated contract manager, site supervision throughout the works, and to obtain good value for money. The Lot 1 pricing information facilitated a transparent process from the start, and gave us the confidence to try something new. We also valued the supplier vetting procedure that had already been undertaken by LUPC through the original tender.

Sykes & Son had previously worked with small institutions and some historical buildings which, alongside their price and scoring against tender criteria, gave us confidence in their abilities.

We also valued working with a small company because, as a small institution, we wanted the personal touch and, perhaps, to forge a longer-term partnership. Work started in March 2012 and the bulk of works had to be undertaken in the Easter and Summer holidays, with a deadline for staff to vacate Kensington Square by 1st September, in time for the new academic year. The BBC Proms occupy key parts of our campus during the summer and it was essential that the contractor’s team operated a flexible approach to working. The combination of managing, in-house, a small building project with professional assistance from Sykes & Son was a real success.

The College’s Estates team was involved, as much of the project work was undertaken by the in-house team (logistics and electrics). Regular project meetings facilitated transparency and ensured there was no sense that external contractors were taking away work from our own staff. Ultimately, our team knew their limitations, and recognised you could only do so much in-house. There was also a sense that by contracting with a small company, the contractor’s staff felt part of the team.

The move from Kensington Square ran to time and budget, saving the College rent and utilities costs of £150,000 pa and installing key research and support teams into the heart of the College.

We set new standards for office accommodation and involved staff in the move, for example, by giving all those involved choices as to furniture (all from LUPC frameworks), flooring and colour schemes. Only two support departments were not moved and they have both asked for their offices to be upgraded to our new standards.

If there were any negatives I’d say, at first, using the NEC3 contract seemed like a lot of paperwork. But I’m much clearer on using it now and, for me, it was a good taster as we’re about to undertake an M&E Maintenance tender under Lot 2 of the same framework. It’s lucky we could test it out on a one-year contract first.

Overall though, I’d say take the plunge and give it a go. From a smaller institution’s point of view, it’s worked for us and if you haven’t got the support of a dedicated procurement manager, it’s good to have the support of LUPC.”

For information on the Estates Maintenance Services agreement visit www.lupc.ac.uk or www.gem.ac.uk