

Civil Engineering students taste new breakfast serial

University of Birmingham undergraduates benefit from Amey's design expertise and hear about topical civil engineering projects, challenges and solutions.

In November 2009, major construction company, Amey, relocated its international design hub into new offices in Birmingham and in 2010, established a broad-ranging Memorandum of Understanding with the School of Civil Engineering. Within this MoU, Amey Associate Director, Paul McCormick, and Jenny Illingsworth, School of Civil Engineering Industrial Liaison Manager, pioneered an initiative involving regular breakfast meetings for students, presented by graduates as part of their engineering training.

Key to the success has been Technical Director, Dick Feast, whose practical experience is invaluable, and the skills of the young graduates. The willingness of students to arrive at 8am to engage in real engineering challenges, before returning to lectures, has been impressive and a sustained two meetings per term is expected, thanks to the efforts of everyone involved.

The first meeting on 18 February involved a case study on maintenance and repair complications of a bridge half-joint within Spaghetti Junction. After sausage and bacon sandwiches washed down with tea, coffee and invigorating orange juice, the 17 students from all year groups settled to hear about Dick's love of bridges and how his holiday photos tend to feature bridges rather than his wife and family... Dick described the problem in hand, the site's access constraints and the overall design needs. The students were then invited to suggest solutions to a specific repair before hearing how it was actually done. We were all pleased to hear about the immediate, temporary repair which allowed traffic to continue between the M6 and A38(M) while the solution was prepared and completed.



February seminar student participants with Amey graduate engineers (far left and right)

Then on 18 March, graduate engineer Cheryl Parmar challenged the students to plan the removal of two bridges across the M50. A rapport was clearly developing: one student suggested blowing them up and, after the laughter died down, was delighted to hear that sometimes this is exactly what is done! Students had also brought some of their designs to discuss. They tabled the drawings and were treated to an impromptu mini-lecture on how to construct the design, safely, before touring the office and meeting other engineers.

We look forward to more of the same next year with the next cohort of undergraduates and thank Amey's team again for their time and effort in making these seminars a huge success.

For more information or if your company would like to contribute to similar student seminars, please contact [Dr Jenny Illingsworth](#).