

Open for Business

Next month, the Police Federation takes up residence of its new headquarters, conference and learning and development centre in Leatherhead, Surrey.

Not only will it improve conditions for Federation staff, but it will also offer its membership better conference and training facilities.



Delays, jacuzzis and late-licences; it's fair to say the new Police Federation Headquarters in Leatherhead has certainly attracted a lot of interest since building work began in 2005.

But as the Federation prepares to move into its new premises next month, few people are aware that the building will offer members and their families four-star accommodation for a fraction of normal hotel prices.

For nearly four decades the Federation, the largest of all the police staff associations has been housed in three rambling terraced Victorian properties in Surbiton in South West London. In 2001, a long overdue decision was taken to move. But as Brian Fenlon, the Federation's treasurer, says, there were firm ideas about the form in which the new headquarters should take.

"We were conscious of delivering good value for money from the start. It was about improving working conditions for staff, but also about affordability and improving the service we offer our members. Saving money on training, but also making money was always part of the business case.

"It had to be a commercial business. From the start we wanted there to be revenue coming in that would help cover the costs of running the building," he says.

The idea for hotel accommodation came from Amsterdam, where police own a hotel in the city that is used by other officers from Holland and around the world. It's rarely empty, providing a useful revenue stream.

While Leatherhead may not be jostling for poll position on everyone's holiday destination list, its location, just off the M25 in Surrey, makes it an excellent base for police officers, their immediate family and retired officers visiting London, which is just 40 minutes away by train.

Top theme park attractions Chessington and Thorpe Park are nearby, as well as Wimbledon and Twickenham, and Gatwick airport is just 20 minutes away.

A local firm, Charlton House, will run the accommodation facilities on behalf of the Federation. This includes up to 55 rooms which have been kitted out to Holiday Inn standard. The training department will have first



Taking shape: The new Federation headquarters at Leatherhead have come a long way from the early days as a building site.

priority on the rooms, but it is estimated that 25 rooms will be available for federated members and their families at any one time. Facilities include a swimming pool, sauna and gym.

The price of rooms is still under discussion, but the commercial rate will be competitive. For federated ranks, the price will be even less.

As well as hotel accommodation, the new headquarters offers extensive conference and training facilities.

In addition to the revenue provided by the hotel facilities, the Federation will save approximately £1/2million a year by training its representatives at its own premises, instead of having to outsource their training requirements, says Mr Fenlon.

But as well as the commercial aspects of the new facility, John Francis, general secretary of the Police Federation says the aim was also to make it as environmentally friendly as possible.

The building is made from materials from sustainable forests. The roof is covered with approximately 30 solar panels which will heat much of the water.

There is no air conditioning as such, but instead an advanced system of



airflow regulates the temperature within the building.

Where possible, all food produce has been bought from local suppliers. Where this is not possible, only fair trade products are to be used. Most of

the waste produced by the facility will be also recycled.

The former Met Police wildlife officer says: "This has always been an area of interest for and I'm really impressed with the way the project has gone."