

Outside Broadcast on the move

After 42 years at Kendal Avenue, OBs head for a new home

The trucks were yet to arrive, the shelves where the stores will go were empty and workmen were still making preparations, but soon Langley, OBs' new base near Slough, would be fully operational.

The move from Kendal Avenue, home of Outside Broadcasts for 42 years, began in December with the switch of office staff as the department prepares for a future outside the BBC. Nobody yet knows whether it will remain part of a privately owned BBC Resources or sold as a separate entity, but OBs' head Mark Tugwell believes the move will set the business up for a healthy future. 'Kendal Avenue was too big for our needs and working conditions were poor,' he says. 'We have a ten year lease here, providing stability and certainty – and the roof doesn't leak.'

OBs has long sought a replacement for Kendal Avenue, but the need for big buildings available 24 hours a day 365 days a year with room for lorries with large turning circles made finding a suitable location tricky.

Langley has been leased from a property company, Insight Investments. The front building, a minute's walk from Langley station, houses the office staff with room at the back for stores and vehicles. A second building is for electronic and mechanical maintenance operations and special cameras.

Although only 20 minutes by train from Ealing Broadway, Langley counts as a regional building as it's outside the M25. 'At Kendal Avenue we were prevented from taking on contracts for regional productions because of complex rules on production resources being outside London,' says Tugwell. 'That's no longer an issue.'

At 55,000 square feet, Langley is half the area of Kendal Avenue and Tugwell says the move is a good opportunity for a clear out of years of clutter. But there will be no room for the vehicle workshop, and on-site lorry maintenance will cease. 'We're doing our best to redeploy people,'



says Tugwell.

Kendal Avenue was an aeroplane factory in the 1930s and later a toffee factory before OBs moved in in 1965. It won't close entirely; BBC transport is still there as is visual effects.

OBs has around 330 staff, many of whom are always on the road. The workforce at Langley numbers around 90. Only a few temporary staff were unable to make the switch and although journeys to work are longer for many, that is slightly balanced, Tugwell says, by being against the traffic heading towards London. There has been help with transport and relocation costs. 'It's much nicer than Kendal Avenue which was dark, damp and depressing,' says Katie Steele, an allocator with the sound team.

One item not going to Langley is a camera pedestal built in the 1980s for the Queen Mother's funeral.

It is bound for the national broadcasting museum in Bradford as by the time she died in 2002 it was obsolete.

Above: The end of an era at Kendal avenue.
Below: Inside the old building

