

Happy 20th Birthday FFT! Today, 19th April 2021, marks 20 years since Faithorn Farrell Timms was established.

From humble beginnings in a small serviced office in Dartford, to four regional offices and over 85 professional, technical and support staff, it's been a momentous journey, made possible only by the support and commitment of our staff, Partners, and of course our clients and associates, to whom we extend massive thanks.

Over the past two decades, we have grown from a small building surveying practice, into an established business with a broad professional consultancy offering, covering a range of client sectors and disciplines.

From humble beginnings...

Back in 2001 we had fewer than 10 staff and served a small number of housing associations and schools. But we were a bright, young and innovative firm, and we found that our infectious energy and ambition to do things differently, and better, quickly secured us a core of early loyal clients. The support shown by these 'early adopter' clients was matched by the faith of our first tranches of employees, many of whom left secure employment to be part of our exciting journey.

By the end of our first year, we had turned over more than £1m in fee income, and staff numbers had risen to more than 10. In 2002, we opened our second office in Islington, in response to growing workloads in North London. It was an office that went on to support some of the most innovative social housing projects of the time, including major tenanted local authority housing stock transfers, and the UK's first housing Private Finance Initiative projects.

As the Practice grew and we relocated the Dartford office to Orpington in 2004, we began to promote our first Partners from within. An early example of our intent to support the career aspirations of our people, this paved the way for our partners taking on increasing responsibility for developing longstanding client relationships and business streams.

As individual partners and staff demonstrated personal ambition, so we started to open further offices around the UK, including the South Coast, the North East and Cardiff. This strategy allowed us to attract more great people from a wider geographical reach, whilst expanding our service offering to a broader geography.

2001 - 2021

... To two decades of family commitment

Something that amazes many fellow employers, and even us, is that 70% of those we employed in our first year 2001 are still with us 20 years on. It's an achievement we consider something very special indeed.

Our 'Ten Year Club' is also thriving, with seven staff having become 'members' in 2020, and another two due to join this year. We believe that success like this comes from the fact we have always worked together as a family unit. The 'FFT Family' is something we have nurtured from day one. Whilst we do of course have a chain of command so to speak, everyone is on an even footing, with no formal hierarchy or 'them and us' environment.

Keeping the family together is something we have always strived to do, especially during the pandemic when lockdowns, remote working and furloughs threatened to unpick the seams. But we remained dedicated to maintaining the togetherness that everyone valued so much, listening to feedback and acting on suggestions from all around the practice. This year really has taught us the value of our people, and of their commitment to FFT.

Investing in our people, for stronger client relationships

We are proud to share that during this challenging time, we were able to avoid making any redundancies. In fact, on the contrary, staff recruitment continued apace, with 10 new team members taken on from apprentice to senior surveyor level since March 2020. Staff retention also remains high.

Investing in our people is important to us here at FFT, and our Investors in People Gold accreditation, achieved in 2019, is testament to the value we place on staff training, development and well-being.

We actively encourage personal and professional development through CPD training, and are also fervent supporters of apprenticeship and graduate training. In fact, anything that a member of the team aspires to be or to learn will always be considered.

We have a themed programme in the pipeline to help celebrate our 20th anniversary, a large proportion of which is dedicated to people skills development, with the likes of a Future Leaders Programme to support those with management ambitions, and workshops and training sessions for all across a variety of subjects.

But it doesn't end there, with support extending beyond professional and career progression. For the first time, we will introduce a comprehensive private healthcare and well-being package, designed to encourage our people to better prioritise physical and mental health and build broader skills and interests outside of the workplace, for an improved work-life balance.

Our theory is that, by attracting and retaining the best people, and by supporting their progression and improvement, we are able to forge ahead with our core value of fostering long-term client relationships, and delivering exceptional service and quality. Because when our staff feel happy, supported and motivated, this impacts directly upon our clients. And with many of the client relationships that were forged back in 2001 still going strong, it would appear this is an approach that works.

Maintaining our core values, through thick and thin

On the subject of core values, those of the original Partner team are still as strong today as they were 20 years ago when the FFT vision began.

We remain committed to becoming acknowledged UK-wide as a respected provider of surveying and property consultancy services, and for our dedication to delivering outstanding value, as well as for giving back to the community.

We are also still firmly focused on increasing our capacity, advancing our expertise and improving our agility and resilience in an ever-changing world, not least one that has been somewhat drained by a pandemic. Having said that, whilst there were plenty of challenges to overcome, we have been able to navigate and overcome the commercial and personal impact of COVID-19, and have much confidence in the year ahead.

Fortunately, operating in an industry where demand remained buoyant, we were able to maintain service delivery standards by quickly adapting to new ways of working. At this point, it is important to say that we have been overwhelmed by the support and loyalty shown by our clients, without which the year would have been all the more challenging.

Valuable lessons have been learnt during COVID, and we have been able to improve efficiency in many respects as a result of these trying times. We fully intend to continue progressing as much as we can with these improvements, so that we not only meet, but surpass client expectations.

Supporting clients, supporting communities

Our Partners have, since day one, been committed to giving back to the communities in which we work. We feel strongly about the importance of providing opportunities for disadvantaged young people, helping them develop their educational and career prospects. So much so that, in 2008, we created the Effinity Charitable Foundation, a registered charity aimed at supporting this endeavour.

Through the foundation, we are able to provide financial and practical support to children and young adults who have the enthusiasm and desire to get ahead, but who might otherwise not be able to realise their full potential.

Social value has always been a driving force for FFT and, over the years, as it also became increasingly important amongst our clients. So we broadened our outreach, aligning the charitable objectives of FFT with those of our clients.

Team-wide, we actively seek out opportunities to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the communities we and our clients work within. Where we can, we play an active role in helping our clients identify employment and training opportunities for their residents, and their wider local communities.

2001-2021

During 2020, we donated over £50,000 in support of communities in need. Working alongside a number of clients, we also funded initiatives such as a kickboxing academy workshop designed to help young people build their self-confidence; the distribution of 1,250 wash bags to homeless individuals and deprived families, and the gifting of 500 stationery sets to schools to hand out as Christmas gifts to those who may not otherwise have received anything over the festive season.

One of the main themes of our 20th anniversary programme is charity and social value. As part of this, we have set aside £20,000 to continue to support the development and education of young people, and will also dedicate time and financial support to up to 20 client-nominated social value or community initiatives, including practical work experience for job seekers. We also plan to commit £5,000 to the support or development of a community asset renovation project.

Looking to the future

It really has been quite a couple of decades since Faithorn Farrell Timms was founded. Five prime ministers. Two recessions. A global pandemic. The invention of the iPhone, and 'Google it' coming from out of nowhere to become one of the most used phrases in history.

We are incredibly proud of where we have come from, and of what we've achieved over the years. A raft of awards and accreditations, fantastic feedback, and testimonials to warm the heart. All made possible by our valued people, our clients, our suppliers and our Partners.

We look forward to continuing nurturing our working relationships, to carrying on giving back to the communities we all serve, and most of all, to enjoying the future journey ahead together.

Happy anniversary FFT!

2001-2021