



Media release

Surgeons' Hall Toasts Strongest Turnover in 511 Years of History

The Commercial arm of one of Scotland's oldest institutions has announced record revenues, driven by the burgeoning success of its thoroughly modern hospitality and events business.

Surgeons' Hall in Edinburgh has achieved a turnover of £4.25 million – a 20% increase on the previous year – with success attributed to new business opportunities being realised to support the ancient institution.

The dedicated Commercial Enterprise team was established a decade ago to manage commercial activities held within the College Campus, with all profits supporting the College's charitable aims in education, assessment and advancement in surgery.

Scott Mitchell, Commercial Director at Surgeon's Hall, said: "These performance figures are no fluke, but the culmination of 10 years of creative thinking, careful planning and painstaking delivery.

"This shows what a masterstroke it was to set up a dedicated commercial arm of the college 10 years ago. We are now seeing that coming into its own. However, we won't be resting on our laurels and will keep innovating and evolving."

Commercial Enterprises promotes, sells and manages conferences, corporate events, weddings and other events across the College's buildings, which include the King Khalid building and the modern Quincentenary Conference Centre, created to celebrate the institutions 500th anniversary.

The team also manage the four-star, 77-bedroom hotel, Ten Hill Place, which saw a range of improvements in the past year, seeing bookings increase along with positive reviews on influential sites such as TripAdvisor.

Other highlights which have contributed to the strong financial performance include the opening of the new Prince Philip Building in May 2015. The former, run down university language school underwent a £1.5m restoration and was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh and is now a thriving venue, particularly popular for weddings.

That has strengthened the College's year-round events and conference offering. The financial year saw it cater for in excess of 500 events, including its biggest ever medical conference, while also playing host to 16 Christmas events, accounting for almost 1600 covers.

Another performance boost came thanks to the opening of Café 1505 which serves both visitors to the refurbished Surgeons' Hall museum and also caters for significant passing sit-in and takeaway business in the city's south side.

The most recent business figures also reflect the success of the decision to open up Surgeons' Hall as a Festival-Fringe venue – last August saw seven theatres play host to 80,000 customers, while also delivering significant food and beverage sales.

The majority of these changes have come under the stewardship of Mr Mitchell who led Surgeons' Hall to be recently named the city's best performing business with up to 50 employees at the prestigious Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

He added: "That was a fantastic accolade for the team who have worked so hard to bring about all of these exciting changes and to create the amazing buzz which is now around Surgeons' Hall.

"There is a fantastic spirit in the team and the sheer variety and range of events and occasions we are involved in help keeps everybody fresh and enjoying the work we do here. Surgeons' Hall really is a venue of calibre for all seasons.

"Now we are all looking forward to 2016-17 and to delivering even better experiences to our customers and even better financial results. There's no doubt there is an added incentive working here when you know all profits go back into the College's globally important medical work."

An example of ongoing innovation is the imminent launch of a new Scottish experience night, Slainte at Surgeons' Hall, which will open up the building's stunning and historic Playfair Hall to around 16,000 tourists from May to September.

Mr Mitchell and his team were inspired to launch the event after the closure of the King James Thistle hotel brought to an end its 'Jamie's Nights' which had been running for 40 years, giving visitors to Edinburgh a taste of Scottish culture.

The new Slainte event – featuring high quality Scottish dining, music and dance – has already met rave reviews from tourism influencers and is expected to boost tourism in the city.

Mr Mitchell added: "This demonstrates that we won't stop thinking about new opportunities and we hope Slainte will grow into one of Scotland's premier tourist attractions combining our historic venue with the best of Scottish entertainment and hospitality."

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh is one of the world's oldest medical institutions founded in 1505 after receiving a Royal Seal of Cause from the town council which was ratified by King James IV 1506.

It provides education and assessment for medical students, surgical trainees and consultants and supports research to advance standards of care for the future. Surgeons trained and assessed through the College take skills all over the world.

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Issued on behalf of Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh Commercial Services by Holyrood Partnership, 0131 561 2244 or info@holyroodpr.co.uk