

## ***THE EDGE***

***Opening 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015***

Your Royal Highness, friends and colleagues, welcome tonight.

30 years ago the University of Bath built an Arts Theatre. The idea was to add other arts spaces to it. That never happened. Thirteen years ago my first major decision as Vice Chancellor was to build the Sports Training Village. Within two years, it was evident that the STV would become a home of national and international sporting excellence – a place for elite athletes but also for all our community (students, staff, and local residents of all ages). I realised then that we needed to provide a similar home for the arts – and be able to offer our academic and our civic communities the place where they could participate in many different types of artistic endeavour.

It has taken a while but now – in this complex – we have that place. It comprises 1.4 million litres of concrete, 56 tonnes of steel, 2,500 sq metres of aluminium cladding and over 5000 white blocks – I have not counted the glass panes. I thank the architect, Peter Clegg, of Feilden Clegg Bradley; the project managers Jones Lang LeSalle; and contractors Bouygues for making it a reality. It took 18 months to build – a remarkable achievement given its complexity and quality. I pay particular tribute to Professor Kevin Edge, our DVC, and Martyn Whalley, our Director of Estates, who led the project, bringing it in on time and to budget.

What we have built here is not just another arts centre – though it has phenomenally good music, dance, acting, exhibition, digital technology, practice and performance studios and making spaces. This place has been designed to bring together arts and management students and practitioners. It will be a hub of artistic creativity and management innovation. Our world class School of Management is locating its executive development education here. We believe this to be the first time any Western European university has ever created such an environment.

Already, it is proving attractive. Since the building opened its doors in February, over 87,000 visits have been recorded.

Whilst the University has invested to make this creative and innovative centre a reality, it would not have happened without the generosity of those individuals and organisations that share our vision. I would particularly like to thank the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Alumni Fund, Professor Raymond Schinazi and Mr Jack Keenan. It also gives me great pleasure to thank Alan Cotton – the renowned landscape artist and our first honorary arts professor – for the gift of three of his latest works that are hanging behind me. Alan has been an unwavering advocate for the arts here at Bath

We have christened this centre “The Edge” – not in homage to any particular individual known in our community – or even beyond. We have called it “The Edge” because we want it to be at the forefront of developments in the arts and in management – and particularly at the interface of the two.

To misquote from the film “The Field of Dreams” – “build it and they will come”. We have built it, we offer it now to this and subsequent generations who will come – I hope they will be creative and innovative for us all.

Now, it is my great honour to invite His Royal Highness, The Earl of Wessex, our Chancellor, to officially open “The Edge”.