

## British Council for Offices' honour Midlands and Central England's best workplaces at annual Regional Awards

3 years ago



Five workplaces across the Midlands and Central England have been recognised at the annual British Council for Offices' (BCO) Regional Awards.

The BCO Midlands and Central Awards Lunch returned in-person to the ICC in Birmingham, recognising the region's highest quality developments and setting the standard for excellence in the office sector across the UK.

The winning workplaces include:

- Three Snowhill, Queensway, Birmingham (Commercial Workplace)
- Joules Head Office, The Barn, Market Harborough, (Corporate Workplace)
- PwC, One Chamberlain Square, Birmingham (Fit Out of Workplace)
- The Dock, Kings Langley (Refurbished/Recycled Workspace)
- St Peter's Gate, Nottingham (Projects up to 1,500m<sup>2</sup>)

Winner of the Commercial Workplace category, Three Snowhill in Birmingham is a visionary Grade A development and part of the largest ever speculative city centre office scheme built outside London. The BCO judging panel commended the building for delivering an exceptional working environment with an exemplary range of facilities for its occupants and visitors. Particularly, praising the emphasis has been placed on wellbeing facilities, including a gymnasium, treatment rooms, sauna, showers and clothes drying facilities for cyclists, along with cycle storage and electric bike and EV charging points. It is complemented by an impressive arrival experience and office floor plates with excellent views over the cityscape. The project chose to reuse the basement area designed and built for a previous scheme and overcame significant technical challenges to realise substantial cost and embodied carbon benefits. The design and construction performance was carefully and comprehensively measured, achieving BREEAM Excellent, EPC B and WiredScore Platinum 100/100.

The new 60,000 sq. ft UK headquarters of Joules in Market Harborough has won the prize for best Corporate Workplace. The repurposed building brings the brand's head office teams from five separate

offices under one roof for the first time, praised by the BCO judging panel for amplifying its distinctive heritage and optimising the site's semi-rural setting. It consists of a series of new interconnecting 'barn structures', each with its own character, which have been specifically designed to enable the company's move to a more flexible way of working. The space revolves around a central atrium with a structural tree at its centre, which the judges commented created a strong sense of place that respects the natural surroundings of the site. Office and studio spaces are light, airy and open plan, with breakout and specialist collaboration rooms, while the wellbeing of staff is promoted through exercise and nourishment initiatives, 'sit-stand' workstations and biophilia. Boasting sustainability best practise, the EPC A energy-saving envelope strategies include high performance insulation and glazing, optimal window sizing, sun-shading and airtightness. All in all, the judges were incredibly impressed in how the designers had understood, embraced and delivered a building which directly responded to the Joules brand essence, culture and workplace strategy.

One Chamberlain Square in Birmingham city centre continues PwC's workplace evolution and has won the award for best Fit Out of Workplace. Taking the blank canvas of a Grade A office space, the fit out has created what PwC describes as a new 'work-home', a distinctive yet highly functional workplace destination for its people, clients and visitors. The BCO judges felt that the sense of hospitality was evident at both occupier and visitor level, with strong sight lines across the space and positive wayfinding enabling the visitor to understand the internal geography. Collaboration is at the heart of the design, with an openness in layout and intent demonstrated by themed floors, each purposefully embracing Birmingham's diverse heritage and connected by a feature staircase. The judicious use of furniture as space division and planning offers the flexibility to accommodate different ways of working and respond to the evolving needs of the firm. An inviting visual environment, the space promotes accessibility and interaction, providing a superb platform for better management and decision making and a real sense of community.

Winning in the Refurbished Recycled Workplace category, The Dock, Kings Langley is a striking and contemporary refurbishment by Alchemy Asset Management in conjunction with Tristan Capital Partners. Originally built in 2015 for a single occupier, the formerly vacant office building has undergone a deceptively simple CAT A refurbishment which maximises the available space within. The BREEAM Excellent scheme has extensively reconfigured the reception to emphasise the entrance to the building and transformed a sterile atrium into a warm and welcoming space with multiple touch down and collaboration options. Additional services have been added to allow subdivision and achieve two tenancies per floor and the building has been brought up to WiredScore Gold rating. The workspace delivers exceptional ESG credentials, including renewable energy sourced from roof mounted PV panels and has secured a 2-star Fitwel certification. The judges were particularly impressed with the deceptively simple interventions and the clever re-emphasis and maximisation of the limited spaces available.

The Grade II listed St. Peter's Gate in Nottingham city centre is the winner in the category for Projects up to 1,500m<sup>2</sup>. CPMG Architects has overseen the substantial internal refit of the former Standard Chartered Bank to bring its team together in a single studio headquarters. The design takes advantage of the loftiness of the striking three-storey structure, delivering the required amount of space through the sympathetic installation of a mezzanine floor, while retaining many of the building's original 1870s features. The BCO judges were impressed by the immediate sense of light, airiness and space within the building, with daylight pouring in from the large-scale windows. The reception area takes the form of a coffee bar at the heart of the space which adds to the sense of generosity of welcome towards visitors and provides breakout space for staff. Meeting spaces are both formal and informal, with the former

subterranean bank vaults now home to an agile work environment, including a break-out zone and welfare areas.

Lee Jones, Partner at Quantem and Chair of the BCO Midlands and Central Judging Panel commented: This year's entrants not only showcase the very best of our sector, they also continue to redefine what best practice looks like. We have seen a number of exceptional working environments nominated for the BCO Midlands and Central awards, which clearly demonstrate the continued importance of the office. The pandemic has accelerated positive existing trends towards flexible and collaborative workplaces that facilitate agile working and cater for the varied needs of the workforce. It is also inspiring to see the growth of sustainable and energy efficient projects, which are maintaining the focus on the health and wellbeing of occupants."

Richard Kauntze, Chief Executive of the BCO commented: "I am delighted to see the BCO Regional Awards programme return to in-person events after two years of disruption, enabling industry professionals to reconnect whilst celebrating excellence and best-in-class design. From the visionary development at Three Snowhill, to the design at Joules encompassing strong brand essence, many of this year's Midlands and Central winners have demonstrated impressive achievements of purpose in their designs, whilst demonstrating sustainability best practise. I look forward seeing how these winning offices perform at the BCO Nationals Awards in October and wish all entrants the best of luck."

Midlands and Central England winners will now compete with those from other regions at the BCO National Awards in October 2022. For more information on the awards and applications, visit the BCO website ([www.bco.org.uk](http://www.bco.org.uk)).