

British Council for Offices honours the best workplaces in South of England and South Wales at annual Regional Awards

3 years ago



Six South of England and South Wales workplaces have been recognised at the annual British Council for Offices' (BCO) Regional Awards today.

The South of England and South Wales Awards Dinner returned in-person at We the Curious at Bristol Harbourside, recognising the highest quality developments in the South of England and South Wales and setting the standard for excellence in the office sector across the UK.

The winning workplaces include:

- Teville Gate House, Worthing, Railway Approach, Worthing (Corporate Workplace)
- 400 Longwater Avenue, Green Park, Reading (Commercial Workplace)
- HMRC Cardiff Region Centre, 6 Central Square, Cardiff (Fit Out of Workplace)
- FORGE, 24 Church Street, Woking (Refurbished/Recycled Workplace)
- Bicester Eco-Business Centre, Charlotte Ave, Elmsbrook (Projects up to 1,500m2)
- Now (Phase 1 of Here + Now), Thames Valley Park Drive, Reading (Innovation)

An excellent example of a building with inclusion at the heart of its design and working environment, HMRC's first specialist site, Teville Gate House has won the award for Best Corporate Workplace. The five storey, open plan office was constructed in Worthing Town Centre to retain the specialist staff that HMRC requires, now home to 900 full-time employees. The building is leading the way for design and use, by addressing all areas from digitally enabled workspaces to incorporating stations that are both inclusive and allow flexibility of use. The judging panel highlighted that natural light was evident throughout the building and the collaborative and different workspaces on offer provided environments for all varieties of work. Additionally, judges praised the clarity with which all areas had been taken into consideration to meet the changing needs of HMRC. A final feature that sets this building over the top is the dog wellbeing area, demonstrating the care and consideration for all creatures, great or small! Special note was also given to commend the handling of extreme challenges to the timescale of construction during the pandemic.

Showcasing a workplace designed to be modern and contemporary whilst achieving high sustainability

credentials, with BREEAM Excellent accreditation, EPC 'A' and WELL accreditation, 400 Longwater Avenue has won the award for Best Commercial Workplace. The highly specified building was designed to maximise adaptability through the use of a post-tensioned concrete frame enabling column free floor plates and ample floor to ceiling heights, offering a number of different services strategies to the end occupier. The panel also noted the inviting entrance provides a warm yet modern arrival experience and the exceptional, well designed central core shows what can be done with simple material selections – commending how well executed small details create a huge difference and make this building stand out.

With the quality of this workplace becoming a point of exceptional pride for HMRC and AECOM, HMRC Cardiff Region Centre has won the award for Best Fit Out Of Workplace. Between Ty William Morgan House's environmental and sustainability credentials, inclusivity and accessibility awareness prioritised within its design, and underlying state-of-the-art office specification, this is an impressive offering indeed. The judging panel recognised the use of their internal 'Inclusive Design Guide', which was evident through the creation of an inviting, welcoming and aspirational environment for their staff, who surely recognise internally that this space has been designed around their wellbeing. The judges also applauded the incorporation of colour throughout, including large landscape murals on all office floors, paired with a personal touch including photos taken by local staff during a photography competition – embodying the strong sense of identity and personality that reflects the communities the building serves.

Challenging the convention of what an office is and should be, FORGE has won the award for Best Refurbished/Recycled Workplace. The judges highlighted the entry of this building in their praise, where you're welcomed with a series of dynamic interventions immediately apparent with the original concrete, exposed brick structure and a real sense of 'cool'. The panel was also impressed with the increase in space via a clever infilling of parking and plant space, and the creation of a dramatic modern reception café space as well as the innovative, interactive IT within the reception that allows tenants to keep track of sustainability targets and booking facilities. The building is also commended for its design including a more flexible space through a dramatic infill grid within the existing atrium and an obligatory 'wing'. The impressive design is complemented further with its range of accolades, including BREEAM Excellent, WiredScore Platinum and a Fitwel 2-star ratings.

As a pioneering sustainable building that provides a comfortable, sociable, and vibrant workspace for the Bicester Eco town, Bicester Eco-Business Centre has won in the Projects Up to 1,500m2 category. Noting the project team's focus on what truly mattered to both client and end-user, the judging panel celebrates the result, presenting a living example of a workspace that performs to the highest energy and comfort standard, delivering true and lasting sustainability on a budget. The judges were particularly impressed with its zero carbon operations, as well as its Passivhaus Plus and BREEAM Outstanding accolades – exemplifying the building to be as forward-thinking as it is high achieving, as well as demonstrating that we have the tools to meet 2030 carbon targets today. The judges also praised the sense of community, health and wellbeing produced by the design of a mix of co-working and private office spaces.

With net zero carbon both in operations and in embodied carbon of building materials production, as well as an impressive BREEAM outstanding rating, this development has truly put sustainability front and centre. Now (Phase 1 of Here + Now) has won the Innovation award. The BCO judging panel commends the focused approach of this impressive refurbishment and the focus on carbon, especially how the building, together with its partner development, could minimise their impact on the planet by reducing whole life carbon emissions. The judges also applauded the building's design emphasis on health and

wellness, making the most of the natural surrounding as well as providing indoor and outdoor exercise facilities and providing RESET air quality monitoring. All of which has well-deservingly resulted in a three-star Fitwel certification.

Catherine Macpherson, Associate Director at Hoare Lea and Regional Judging Chair for the BCO South of England and South Wales region commented: “The excellent submissions we received demonstrate the immaculate standard of high-quality office space in the South of England and South Wales. This year’s winners have shown true resilience and sense of promise, despite the turbulence caused by the global pandemic. Across our region, we have seen an incredible amount of innovation and a strong focus on sustainable practises, backed by impressive accreditations which demonstrate best practice in design adaptability to the needs of the changing workplace.”

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 and celebrate industry excellence and best-in-class design. From Teville Gate House’s proven ability to adapt to occupiers’ changing needs, to the absolute exemplar in sustainability at Bicester Eco-Business Centre, many of this year’s South of England and South Wales’ winners have been people-focused, putting human need at the centre of their designs. I look forward seeing how these winning offices perform at the BCO National Awards in October and wish all entrants the best of luck.”

Widely regarded as one of the best property networking events in the region, the BCO South of England & South Wales Awards Dinner was hosted by experienced broadcaster Beverley Turner, holding an array of talents in her current capacity as a Daily Telegraph columnist, businesswoman and ante-natal educator.

South of England and South Wales 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).