

BCO celebrates Midlands and Central England's best-in-class offices

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The Midlands and Central England's most outstanding workplaces have been announced, with British Council for Offices Awards going to five office buildings across the region. Held at ICC in Birmingham, the BCO's annual Midlands and Central Awards Lunch recognised projects that demonstrate best practice in office design, fit-out, operation and sustainability, setting the standard for excellence across the sector.

The winners of this year's competition in the Midlands and Central England stand out for their user-centred design credentials, as well as their creative implementation of wellbeing and sustainability measures. This year has seen the addition of a new prize – the ESG Award – recognising a workplace that will have a game changing influence on the environment, social value, governance or sustainable outcomes in the commercial building sector.

The BCO Regional Award winners for the Midlands and Central England are:

- ● **TJX Watford Campus**, 73 Clarendon Rd, Watford (**Corporate Workplace**)
- ● **103 Colmore Row**, Birmingham (**Commercial Workplace**)
- ● **Roku HQ**, 2 Cambridge Science Park, Milton Road, Cambridge (**Fit Out of Workplace**)
- ● **Sycamore House**, 2 Gunnels Wood Road, Stevenage (**Refurbished/Recycled Workplace**)
- ● **Cadent Gas**, Ansty Park, Pilot Way, Coventry (**ESG**)

The striking new Watford headquarters of **TJX Europe** received the award for **Best Corporate Workplace**. The project sits in a campus of three buildings, with this c.160,000 sq ft centrepiece linked to the other two refurbished buildings via a bold new bridge, creating a collection of connected villages. The

judges were impressed to see sustainability and employee wellbeing play a defining role in the design and purpose of this outstanding development. Comfortable and eclectic work and social spaces are shaped around the company's culture, with the building providing flexibility to keep pace with future requirements.

103 Colmore Row in Birmingham was crowned **Best Commercial Workplace**. The judges were struck by the respectful way in which this ambitious 26-storey development has changed the city's skyline without dominating the conservation area in which it lies. The predominately glazed façade allows 103 Colmore Row to reflect the streetscape around it, while the muted palette of grey and black finishes gives the building a classic, timeless feel. A dramatic entrance art gallery, roof terrace and restaurant provide amenities for tenants and visitors alike, with stunning views. The judging panel commended the project for its bravery and success, with more than 80% of the building let or under offer.

Roku's office at Building 2, Cambridge Science Park was awarded **Best Fit Out of Workplace**. This fast track fit out blends traditional office areas with workstation laboratory space to allow the company to test its products in a secure environment. The judging panel applauded Building 2 for the steps taken to minimise operational carbon usage and embodied carbon in the design and build. Embracing BCO's Guide to Specification, the building showcases Roku's brand, ethos and culture by carefully accommodating the needs of its workforce and encouraging cross collaboration with other businesses in the science park.

The **Refurbished/Recycled Workplace** award went to Sycamore House in Stevenage, an office that challenges the idea of what makes a good workspace. The building was unanimously acclaimed by the judging panel for its transformation from an unused metal shed into a cutting-edge life-science facility. Sub-divisible laboratory and office spaces co-exist with vibrant, communal areas that are served by a café and dramatically planted winter gardens. The overall effect is of a multi-tenanted building that feels light, open and genuinely collaborative, encouraging interaction between neighbouring start-up companies.

The **ESG** award was given to **Cadent Gas** for its c.100,000 sq ft purpose-built headquarters at Ansty Park, Coventry. The judges singled out this building for its impressive design which is focused on employee engagement and the health and wellbeing of occupants in a light-filled space. Its extensive on-site amenities include a restaurant and gymnasium, mother and baby rooms, multi faith areas, outdoor terracing and cycle storage. The panel also praised efforts to reduce the build's carbon footprint, with locally sourced materials and the use of the latest technology and energy saving measures contributing to first class BREEAM and EPC ratings.

Lee Jones, Partner at Quantem and Chair of the BCO Midlands and Central Judging Panel said: "The calibre of this year's awards has pushed the boundaries of workplace design. The emphasis on carbon reduction, decrease of fossil fuel use and a true focus on the health and wellbeing of all who use workplaces has been outstanding."

Rob van Zyl, Building Services Partner at Cundall and Chairman of the BCO Midlands and Central committee said: "These offices represent best practice in a post-pandemic world. Society has been forever changed, and with it the workplace of the future is emerging. These outstanding projects demonstrate what can be achieved by creative and dedicated teams who are delivering exceptional offices for the Midlands and Central England."

Midlands and Central England winners will compete for the BCO National Awards on Tuesday 3 October 2023.

The lead sponsor for this year's BCO Awards is ISG. Category and Gold sponsors are AECOM, Glamox Luxonic, SAS International and Troup Bywaters + Anders. This year's regional sponsors are Overbury and Quantem. The BCO awards are in association with EG.