

BRITISH COUNCIL FOR OFFICES CROWNS THE UK'S BEST WORKPLACES

2 years ago



Barclays' Glasgow campus was celebrated as the Best of the Best at the British Council for Offices (BCO) National Awards last night, also taking home the prize for Corporate Workplace. Seven further winners were recognised as leading examples of excellence in workplace design in the UK.

The [BCO's](#) respected National Awards programme sets the standard for best-in-class office buildings across the sector. The awards dinner, with guest speaker Jeremy Vine, attracted over 1,200 key players from the industry. The winners of the BCO Regional Awards were among the attendees at Grosvenor House in London, hoping to take home the National Award for their category.

The winners of the BCO National Awards 2023 are:

- *Best of the Best* – Barclays Glasgow Campus
- *Corporate Workplace* – Barclays Glasgow Campus *Highly commended* – TJX Watford Campus
- *Commercial Workplace* – One Portwall Square, Bristol
- *Fit Out of Workplace* – Diageo 1HQ, London
- *Projects up to 1,500m²* – Threesixty Architecture Studio, Inverness
- *Refurbished/Recycled Workplace* – Sycamore House, Stevenage *Highly commended* – Calico, Manchester; The Kensington Building, London
- *Innovation* – Five Bank Street, London
- *ESG* – HERE Building, Thames Valley Park
- *Test of Time* – White Collar Factory, London *Highly commended* – Waterfront Point, Widnes
- *President's Award* – HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) Locations Programme

Barclays' campus has successfully regenerated a derelict site on the bank of the River Clyde. It particularly impressed the judges with the benefits it has delivered for both employees and the wider community through considered placemaking and social initiatives. Combining such initiatives with exceptional workplace design makes it a "truly outstanding" project, the judges remarked. Notable for its focus on creating an inclusive and "barrier-free" working environment, the campus also deploys renewable energy technologies and houses an educational Sustainability Centre.

Another campus, home to TJX in Watford, was a highly commended *Corporate Workplace* for its positive contribution to the local area, where the retailer has been a key employer for 25 years.

Innovation in design and delivery earned One Portwall Square the *Commercial Workplace* prize. The judges were particularly struck by the building's pioneering mixed mode ventilation and cooling systems. Generous floor to ceiling heights, roof terraces on every level and a touchless journey throughout the building also contribute to its success.

Described as "clever and thought through" by the judges, Diageo's new global HQ is the winner of the *Fit Out of Workplace* award. As part of the refit of the space, generous interventions such as a striking feature staircase make connectivity a focal point. The judges also noted that state of the art technology has been deployed with a user experience that is both functional and inspirational.

The prize for *Projects up to 1,500m²* went to Threesixty Architecture's own studio in Inverness, for making an impact larger than its relatively small scale and demonstrating a commitment to "walking the walk". To support the recovery of the high street, the office plays host equally well to yoga classes as a venue for the RIAS convention. A sensitive approach to construction procurement saw the extensive use of local trades to create a beautifully crafted workspace.

The judges found Sycamore House's transformation from tired and underutilised storage shed to cutting edge office "truly inspirational". In the *Refurbished/Recycled Workplace* category, award-winning building, modern and flexible workspaces combine with vibrant communal areas to encourage interaction between occupiers. Large meeting spaces, a welcoming café, winter gardens, and clever use of height and volume create a space that the judges said feels genuinely collaborative.

The BCO celebrated the abundance of high-quality entries to the *Refurbished/Recycled Workplace* category by highly commending two projects. At Calico, a clear distinction between Grade II-listed building fabric and new interventions – including art, colour and texture – won the judges over. The Kensington Building was recognised for its beauty, biodiversity and sustainability credentials.

At Five Bank Street, the judges felt that the European Bank for Reconstruction & Development (EBRD) demonstrated a passion for doing the right thing, both socially and environmentally, while providing a state-of-the-art office environment for its workforce and clients. A materials passport and deconstruction guide for the project was one of the reasons the judges decided it was worthy of the *Innovation* award. On-going post occupancy evaluation also stood out as exemplary.

Through the creative repositioning of the HERE Building, a forensic approach was adopted to tracking and minimising its carbon impact. The winner of the *ESG* award exemplifies how data-led design can deliver an aspirational product. Its timber atrium is a tangible expression of how ESG has permeated every aspect of the project, redefining how a business park can meet the needs of today's occupiers.

White Collar Factory, a previous winner of the BCO's National *Innovation* Award in 2018, was presented the *Test of Time* award. Described by the judges as "a very brave project" that created the next generation flexible office, the building has allowed businesses to grow, during and beyond the pandemic, and is now fully let.

Highly commended for the *Test of Time* award, Waterfront Point felt to the judges like "a real home" for the workforce of Halton Housing and has been easily adapted to reflect changes to the business post-Covid.

The *President's Award* was presented to HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) Locations Programme, a more than decade-long workplace restructure and estate transformation within one of the UK's biggest employers. In that time, 11 new or refurbished HMRC offices have been in the running for the BCO's Regional Awards. 73,000 civil servants now benefit from smarter working and a more supportive culture – increasing colleague satisfaction to 88%. At the same time, the new regional centres enable better service to taxpayers, while supporting levelling up and local communities.

Despina Katsikakis, President of the BCO, said: "In addition to impressive estates savings, what is of particular importance to the BCO is how workplaces are making a positive social impact. As we consider the future role and value of offices, a programme that actively focuses on creating more resilient cities, communities, and societies is highly commendable. We are honoured to give HMRC our 2023 BCO President's Award for just such a programme."

Richard Kauntze, Chief Executive of the BCO, commented: "It's always a joy for the industry to come together at the BCO National Awards to celebrate best-in-class office design. This year, all of the winners demonstrated a clear passion and commitment which goes beyond simple commercial excellence. Putting ESG at the heart of their decision-making was undoubtedly more evident, shining a light on the meaningful role that offices play in society."

Mike Burton, Director at AECOM and Chair of the BCO's National Judging Panel, added: "Visiting and evaluating the shortlisted projects for this year's BCO National Awards has been a pleasure. It has been truly inspirational to see such a high level of holistic design thinking and innovation. The winners have set new standards for the next generation of offices, and I would like to congratulate all of the teams involved."